



SUMMER

No. 992

THE
CORNHILL

Peter Matthiessen

R. W. Clark

Joyce Cary

W. Sansom

Morchard Bishop

Katharine Garvin



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1952

JOHN MURRAY

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Summer, 1952

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

MORCHARD BISHOP has published seven novels, his most recent book is the first full-length biography of William Hayley *Blake's Hayley* (Gollancz). He is also a reviewer and has edited and introduced editions of *Shelley*, *Boswell's Corsican Tour*, and Samuel Roger's *Table-Talk*.

WILLIAM SANSOM worked first in a city commercial bank and then in advertising. He began to write during the war, when he was serving as a London fireman. His last two novels were *The Body* and *The Face of Innocence*, and his most recently published book is a collection of short stories, *A Touch of the Sun* (Hogarth Press). This collection includes *Episode at Gastein* which appeared first in a CORNHILL special supplement.

RONALD W. CLARK was a war correspondent with the 21st Army Group. He is a student of Alpine literature and is now at work on the first biography of the climber W. A. R. Coolidge, who was known to the Victorians as 'the young American who climbs with his aunt and his dog.' Apart from journalism he has published *The Splendid Hills; the Life and Work of Vittorio Sella* and *The Early Alpine Guides* (Phoenix House).

JOYCE CARY studied art at Edinburgh and later joined the Nigerian Political Service. His novels include *The Horse's Mouth*, *The Moonlight*, *A Fearful Joy*, *A Prisoner of Grace* (Michael Joseph). He has also written several books on political philosophy and poetry.

PETER MATTHIESSEN is a young American writer living in Paris and working on his first novel.

KATHARINE GARVIN (Mrs. H. E. Gordon) is a daughter of the late J. L. Garvin whom she described in a written portrait published in 1948. She lives in Cambridge and coaches in Medieval languages and literature and in Latin. She is writing a novel about Cambridge and combines a love of writing poetry with an enthusiasm for swimming, from which many of her poems take their imagery.

THEORY OF THE EARTH

The theory of the earth is a branch of geology which deals with the origin and development of the earth and its various parts. It is a science which seeks to explain the processes which have shaped the earth and its various parts.

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The Natural History of Arcadia

BY MORCHARD BISHOP

RUNNING parallel with man's belief in an after-life of everlasting felicity has persisted a quite contrary doctrine that perfect happiness is to be attained upon this earth. To this conception but one proviso is invariably attached : that the place is not *here*, and the time is not *now* ; and indeed for the last couple of hundred years, since just before the outbreak of the French Revolution, it has been fashionable to situate such a state of affairs at a point in the near future, and to anticipate that its arrival will be effected by Act of Parliament.

It was not ever thus. The Ancients, more wisely than we, or if not more wisely then surely more discreetly, were in the habit of placing their Golden Age in the past and, generally speaking, in a neighbourhood with which they were not particularly familiar. It followed that when, owing to the iniquity of man, and also because of the discovery of iron, Astræa and her sister Pudicitia were obliged to quit the earth to take up their abode in the stars while

Sweet-lipp'd Fraud, with her divided face
Must act Astræa's part, must take Astræa's place,

the classical poets were in a position to sing the departed glories of a lost innocence, and to obtain consolation from the fact that, though the best days were over, they had, at any rate, existed.

For some time this was sufficient, but since man is not constructed to live in a perpetual state of expulsion from the kingdom of his dreams, it was not long before the poets took heart again and started to set up new Paradises a little nearer home, and a little more easy of access, though even so they were careful to situate them in places which either they had never visited or had last seen through the beglamoured eyes of childhood. So Theocritus, writing for the most part in Alexandria, celebrated the pastoral beauties of Sicily, and would no doubt have been astonished to learn that by doing so he was laying the foundations of a myth which, even after two thousand years of progress, is still reasonably vigorous.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF ARCADIA

This myth was based upon the curious belief that agricultural labourers are the happiest, the most contented, of men ; that they are beings who, given a shepherdess to dally with, and a pipe upon which to play, are so naturally cheerful that their days pass in unalloyed delight. It is true, of course, that the climate of Sicily is, and was, excellent, and this may perhaps provide some sort of justification for Theocritus's views on the advantages of rural existence there ; but, if this be so, it is really rather remarkable that his greatest successor in the same vein, Virgil, should have felt unable, when he took over the whole of Theocritus's poetical baggage and wrote his *Eclogues*, to conduct his operations within the confines of his predecessor's territory. Perhaps, though, he had visited Sicily, or if not had conversed with those that had. It is, at any rate, certain that by the time he wrote the island was no longer remote or mysterious ; it would have been as though an English poet should hymn the supernal qualities of the Isle of Wight ! What then was Virgil's strategy ? He boldly shifted Theocritus's entire paraphernalia to Greece, and became sole patentee and originator of the rural paradise known as Arcadia.

Now this was singular, for, as Polybius assures us, Arcadia was a rough, rocky and barren land, which, though it comprehended some fertile valleys, had never, I think, commended itself to the Greeks themselves as a district suited to poetical encomiums. But Virgil did not care ; he had never been to Arcadia, nor had most of his readers : and the consequence was that there arose from his *Eclogues*, and especially from the Fifth and the Tenth of them, a brand-new concept which has ever since, at intervals, returned to plague and titillate the distracted conscience of Western Man. This was the concept of Arcadia, a land of happy and joyous innocence, presided over by the Great God Pan, where neither arms nor commerce flourished, where money was never mentioned, where everybody was good, and happy because they were good, and the weather was continuously fine.

Virgil, moreover, was only the beginning. His tune was soon taken up by Ovid, and, though after the latter had been packed off to Tomi he ceased absolutely to sing the delights of rural retirement and only complained about the climate, the mischief had already been done. Besides, it was not as if Ovid had been banished to Arcadia ; if he had been, no doubt all would have been quite otherwise !

The result was that, so long as the power of Rome endured, so

did the ideal Roman picture of Arcadia ; and, though the shadows were already rising over the Empire, it took a considerable time for their presence to be felt. When this occurred, it was observed that in these shadows there lurked the curious belief of an Eastern and alien people that bliss, though still as ever somewhere else, was rather to be sought in a sphere that was of an altogether different nature—in the future, and in the heavens. The conception of Heaven thus growing ever stronger, that of Arcadia correspondingly dwindled, until, in the long night of the Middle Ages, while there was endless discussion of that curious monkish sin, *Acedia*, the other concept which verbally so much resembled it and which would doubtless, upon a monk, have produced just that same highly dangerous condition, was totally forgotten ; and the laurel, the palm and the pæan were replaced by what Swinburne perhaps a little too vigorously describes as ‘ the ghastly glories of saints.’

There was, to be sure, a moment, and perhaps no more than one, when a synthesis of these two so utterly opposed philosophies might have been effected ; and for this moment we are obliged to have recourse to the works of that least orthodox of historians, the giant Pantagruel, who, in the 28th chapter of the Fourth Book of his History, retails a narrative perhaps as extraordinary as any in this world. It is the tale of Epitherses, the father of Æmilian the Rhetorician, who, as he sailed from Greece to Italy, was becalmed near the Echinades, islands lying ‘ between the Morea and Tunis ’ and near Paxos. Here, it will be remembered, a frightful voice was suddenly heard calling upon Thamous, the pilot of the vessel, who was an Egyptian ; and after the voice had called him thrice, Thamous answered it, saying, ‘ Here am I ; What do’st thou call me for ? What wilt thou have me do ? ’ At which the voice, still louder than before, bade him proclaim when he should come to Paloda that the Great God Pan was dead.

Pantagruel further relates how Thamous was at first afraid to do so, but that, the wind quite deserting them, he conceived this must have been brought about by his disobedience ; and so, getting up on top of the Ship’s Fore-castle, and casting his eyes on the shore, he made the announcement as he had been commanded. And hardly were the words out of his mouth, when ‘ deep Groans, great Lamentations, and Shrieks, not of one Person, but of many together, were heard from the Land.’

It is an amazing story, and, what is still more amazing, the thing reached the ear of Tiberius Caesar, who then reigned in Rome ;

and he sent at once for Thamous, and asked him : ' Who was that Pan ? '

Pantagruel continues :

For my part, I understand it of that Great Saviour of the Faithful, who was shamefully put to Death at Jerusalem, by the Envy and Wickedness of the Doctors, Priests and Monks of the Mosaic Law . . . for He may lawfully be said, in the Greek Tongue, to be Pan, since He is our All. For all that we are, all that we live, all that we have, all that we hope, is Him, by Him, from Him, and in Him ; He is the Good Pan, the Great Shepherd ; who, as the loving Shepherd Corydon affirms, hath not only a tender Love and Affection for his Sheep, but also for their Shepherds.

And he goes on to point out that his interpretation is entirely reasonable, since in fact, ' this Most Good, Most Mighty Pan, Our only Saviour, died near Jerusalem, during the Reign of Tiberius Caesar.'

Such is the tale that Rabelais tells, and the possibilities of a synthesis of this nature are boundless. Only, perhaps unfortunately, it is a synthesis that was never made ; and, as the long centuries pass and we come at last to the Renaissance, it is to find the rift fully established, and the field possessed by two rival and ultimately irreconcilable theories concerning man's potential bliss : on the one hand, there is a future Heaven, on the other, a past, lost Arcadia. And no hope, it would seem, of happiness ever being a present entity, though the present is the only time in which a man can truly be said to experience anything at all. Is it any wonder, then, that the predominant mood of the Renaissance should be a melancholy one, or that such a man as Leonardo should have written towards the end of his life the saddest of all epigrams : ' While I thought that I was learning how to live I have been learning how to die ' ?

Yet it was, I think, significant that the new Arcadia of the Renaissance should, in various subtle ways, be a very different one from that which had existed in classical times. This was only natural, since the Virgilian vision from which it had sprung was now almost as far away in time as Virgil's own day had been from the vanished splendours of the Golden Age. Even so it was a pity, because it meant that there was a sad air of preciousness and unreality about the new Arcadias. The Medici villa at Fiesole was thus styled, and was thus celebrated by Politian and even by Lorenzo the Magnificent himself ; to say nothing of Boccaccio. And in

Jacopo Sannazzaro's poem, *Arcadia*, the place had become, so to speak, more Arcadian than Arcadia itself. It was a phenomenon that Thomas Burnet was to hit off later, when he wrote: 'So the Ancients, besides their Golden Age, which was common to all the earth, noted some parts of it that were more Golden, if I may so say, than the rest . . . as the Elysian Fields, Fortunate Islands, Gardens of the Hesperides, Alcinous . . .'

'More golden than the rest.' Yes, but not in Sannazzaro's poem more happy. By this time, Arcadia, which was steadily growing more perfect, was also steadily growing more unattainable. It was changing from a remote possibility into a dream. And, because of this, the Neo-Arcadians who, strictly speaking, were also decadent Arcadians, were for ever becoming more elegiac and more melancholy in their utterances. Very certainly, the new Arcady was not as the old: Tasso, in his *Aminta*, even went so far as to cut a didactic stick from its hedgerows with which to belabour the artificialities of contemporary life. Such was never Virgil's way.

Moreover, reverting to Virgil, it is notable that a very striking new development of the legend was shortly to arise among the self-conscious, death-conscious, tomb-haunted, heaven-menaced inhabitants of the revived pseudo-Arcadia; which new development may be traced back to his Fifth and Tenth *Eclogues*. In the former, it will be recalled, the speakers, Menalcas and Mopsus, are competing as to who shall sing the best dirge for the dead Daphnis; while, in the latter, Pan laments the decease of Gallus who, with a fate still harder than that of Daphnis, died for love. In the Fifth Eclogue there even comes that image of what the men of the Renaissance could never forget for more than a moment at a time—The Tomb: of which Mopsus sings,

Et tumultum facite, et tumulo superaddite carmen :
Daphnis ego in silvis, hinc usque ad sidera notus,
Formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse

—'and build a tomb, and to it add the lines: I, Daphnis, known to the woods and stars, keeper of a flock most fair, myself yet fairer'—or words to that effect.

A tomb, and in Arcadia! What could be more suggestive to the mind of the Renaissance? Nobody now knows who first thought of it, though there is an interesting suggestion by Bellori, Nicolas Poussin's first biographer, that it may have been the Prelate Rospiglioso, later to become Pope Clement IX. In any case it

hardly matters, for the notion was in the air ; and, though Bellori's story cannot be quite right, for reasons into which I shall in a moment enter,¹ it is just as likely as not that from the brain of this Pope-to-be there first sprang that haunting and enigmatic concatenation of words which almost everyone who has not looked into the matter with some care imagines to be a coinage of the poets of ancient Rome : ET IN ARCADIA EGO.

Bellori, in the work referred to, asserts definitely that Rospiglioso suggested the phrase to Poussin, who duly incorporated it in the painting now at Chatsworth, which could not have been executed earlier than 1625-8. But, unfortunately, it is almost certain that the prelate did not meet the painter before 1632 ; and besides, there is another factor which renders the story as Bellori tells it impracticable. This is the existence in the Corsini Gallery at Rome of another picture, attributed since 1911 to Guercino (though before that to Bartolommeo Schidone), upon which exactly the same words are inscribed. As this picture was painted not later than 1623, it follows that, if Rospiglioso were really the originator of the phrase, then he must first have imparted it to Guercino (which would have been perfectly possible), and that Poussin then borrowed it directly from Guercino for his Chatsworth picture.

At this point some very interesting and complex considerations arise. Guercino's 1623 picture (which, oddly enough, was known to Reynolds when he was in Rome as a Guercino, and not a Schidone, so that Voss's 1911 attribution evidently represents nothing but the correction of a comparatively recent misattribution) —Guercino's picture, I say, represents two Arcadian shepherds who confront with fear and astonishment a skull that rests upon a stone bearing the inscription in question. It is thus, except for the striking new phrase, a painting whose conception is directly in the tradition of the late medieval *Vanitas* and *Dance of Death* pictures, and the inscription may be taken simply to mean : ' Even in Arcadia, there am I '—the ' I ' being Death.

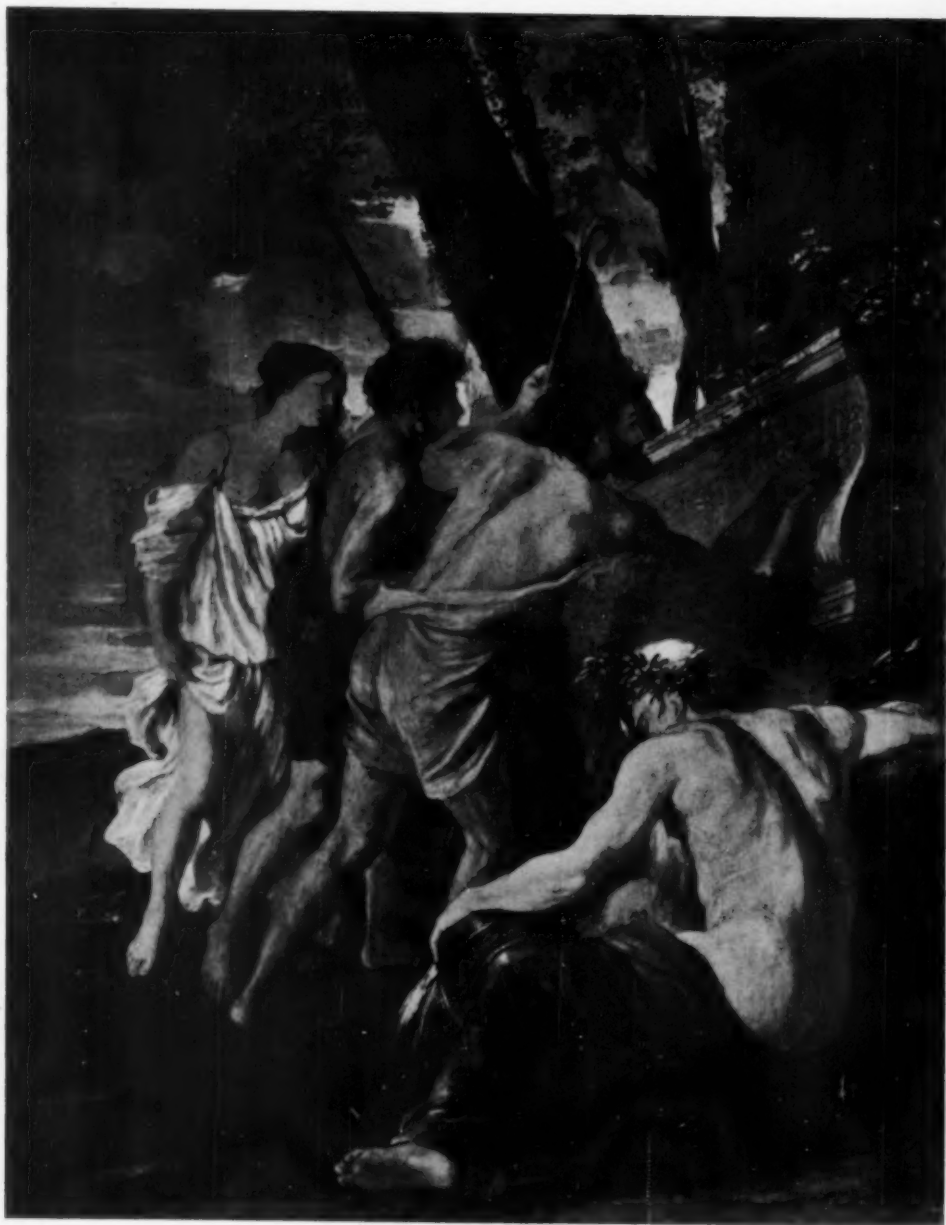
When two or three years later Nicolas Poussin painted the first of his two great pictures which bear the same legend, the essential conception remained unchanged : the shepherds are more numerous, and they have a shepherdess with them, but their attention

¹ Under the learned ægis of Professor Erwin Panofsky of Princeton, whose article ' On the Conception of Transience in Poussin and Watteau,' in *Philosophy and History*, Oxford, 1936, is the classic source of this part of these present meditations.



By courtesy of the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Lichfield

BAS-RELIEF BY PETER SCHEEMAKER AFTER POUSSIN'S PAINTING NOW IN THE LOUVRE
*From a monument (c. 1750) in the park at Shugborough, Staffordshire, erected by Thomas
Anson, M.P.*



'ET IN ARCADIA, EGO'

(The Shepherds in Arcadia) BY POUSSIN

From the Devonshire Collection, by permission of the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement



By courtesy of the Crewe Estate

'ET IN ARCADIA EGO'

(Hon. Mrs. Edward Bouverie, 1750-1825 and Mrs. Crewe, 1744-1818)

BY REYNOLDS



By courtesy of the Sir Robert Witt Library

'L'EMBARQUEMENT POUR CYTHERE' BY WATTEAU

Musée de Louvre

is still arrested by a skull, and they are still in attitudes which suggest shock and surprise. There is, however, one very remarkable development: the legend, instead of being inscribed upon the edge of a low slab, is now carved upon a tall upright tomb, which is, in fact, so large that it tends to dwarf the importance of the skull that still rests upon it. The centre of attention is changing, that is, from the skull to the tomb. This is the Chatsworth picture.

It was yet a few years later, between 1630 and 1635, that Poussin produced his second and more famous version of the scene, which is now in the Louvre; and by this time the process had most startlingly been carried several stages further. Here still are the shepherds and the shepherdess, and here, pre-eminently, is the tomb, with its same inscription. But now the skull has gone, and the Arcadians are no longer in postures which express terror or amazement. They are calm, pensive and melancholy; they have attained an adult poise. That which they brood upon is no longer the crude symbol of the death's-head, but rather the very fact of Death itself, the abstract and not the concrete thing.

It is difficult to stress too much the magnitude of this change, since it is at this precise point that two utterly opposed states of mind are standing poised, and the whole history and meaning of Arcadian affairs during the next three hundred years or so depend upon the transference which we may here see being effected before our eyes. Put at its simplest, it may be stated thus: These pensive and melancholy shepherds no longer lament the generalised fact that Death itself is in their Arcadia, as symbolised by the skull; what they lament is something deeper, more personal—the death of an individual, as symbolised by the tomb: the death of him who lies within the tomb.

Once this be fully understood, a great deal of the artistic history of the centuries that followed Poussin's picture becomes clearer, for it will be seen that, in a fashion that one has learnt more to associate with living organisms than with words, the phrase *Et in Arcadia Ego* is subtly shifting its emphasis, is growing and changing in its significance. So much so, indeed, that sundry scrupulous men, gifted with a good ear for Latin cadences, from time to time have unconsciously emended the line, causing it to run *Et Ego in Arcadia*, or something rather like it. One of these was William Hazlitt, with whom the Louvre picture was a special favourite. He refers to it, very beautifully, in his essay *On a Landscape of Nicolas Poussin's*: 'Who shall celebrate, in terms of fit praise, his picture of the

shepherds in the Vale of Tempe, going out in a fine morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription :—ET EGO IN ARCADIA VIXI.' And elsewhere, in his essay *Why the Arts are not Progressive*, he gives the English version of his new and unauthorised rendering : 'So Nicolas Poussin describes some shepherds wandering out in a morning of the spring, and coming to a tomb with this inscription, "I also was an Arcadian."' "

For it was thus and not otherwise that men, long before Hazlitt's day, had come to interpret these words—as an awful intimation coming directly from the occupant of the tomb : *Hodie mihi, cras tibi*. As early as 1685, Poussin's second biographer, Félibien, was cheerfully translating the phrase, 'I, too, lived in Arcadia,' making the subject of his sentence not Death, but the dead man, and gratuitously assuming the missing verb to be in the past tense. Diderot, Angelica Kauffmann, Fragonard and a whole host of others followed the trail thus indicated, and indeed the last went so far as to attach the phrase to a painting which represents a couple of Cupids making love in front of a monument.

Dr. Johnson, when Sir Joshua Reynolds exhibited at the Academy of 1769 the portrait of the beautiful Mrs. Bouverie and Mrs. Crewe displayed before an urn with the old, correct inscription, went even a stage further, and growled : 'What can this mean? It seems very nonsensical—I am in Arcadia.' His ear for good Latin was, presumably, superior to his imagination, and it called for the perceptiveness of a most unexpected scholar to enlighten him. This was none other than His Majesty King George III, and he, according to Reynolds (who, since he had seen in Rome the Guercino that started the whole business, was conversant with the right translation), experienced no difficulty over the line. 'He saw it yesterday,' Reynolds told the demurring Doctor, 'and said at once : "Oh, there is a tombstone in the background. Ay, ay, *Death is even in Arcadia!*"' "

But Sir Joshua and his sovereign were in the smallest of minorities. Though Watteau did not, so far as I know, actually make use of the phrase, by far the greater part of his wonderful pictures were painted in the very spirit of the sentence in its now reversed meaning ; and his courtiers, as they set out beneath skies of no earthly radiance for their unattainable Cytheras, are Arcadians to a man and to a woman, though Arcadians who in some inexplicable fashion have mislaid their Paradise. Nay, they are something more, for these are beings who have escaped the bonds of time, and who, in their

mute acceptance of the evanescence of all things, are themselves grown eternal, *because* they are the creatures of a moment. The crowning paradox of Watteau's mysterious art is that, in it, the moment and eternity are not opposed ; because nothing endures, all things are for ever. But that is another matter altogether. Here it remains only to say that, by the time the young Goethe came upon the scene, the transformation had been completed : his account of his triumphant journey into Italy is heralded simply by the motto : ' Auch ich in Arkadien.'

Since then, Arcadias have been as plentiful as ever, in scenes little visited by their creators. From the Forest of Arden to the Golden Road to Samarkand, the mind of man has sought out strange paradises. Bernardin St. Pierre placed his in the Mauritius, and the tremendous success of his *Paul & Virginia* rests largely upon the fact that his book was and remains one of the last and best pieces of true Arcadian literature. It is agreeable to contemplate the early years of his young Arcadians :

Their sole study was how to please and assist each other ; for of all other things they were ignorant, and knew neither how to read nor write. They were never disturbed by researches into past times, nor did their curiosity extend beyond the bounds of the mountain. They believed the world ended at the shores of their own island, and all their ideas and affections were confined within its limits. Their mutual tenderness . . . employed all the activity of their souls. Their tears had never been called forth by long application to useless sciences. Their minds had never been wearied by lessons of morality, superfluous to bosoms unconscious of ill. They had never been taught that they must not steal, because everything with them was in common ; or be intemperate, because their simple food was left to their own discretion ; or false, because they had no truth to conceal. Their young imaginations had never been terrified by the idea that God has punishments in store for ungrateful children . . . All they had been taught of religion was to love it.

In fact, they were genuine Arcadians after the old model, and it is a curious consideration that, once upon a time, men referred to a state of affairs of this kind by the name of Communism ; indeed, the question whether the idea of Communism did not in its inception spring from this root of Arcadia is one that might well make ' matter for another tale.'

As lately as the end of the nineteenth century, Kenneth Grahame, in the Prologue to his *Golden Age*, put in a nutshell the last sad

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decline of the Arcadian ideal, when he wrote thus concerning his vanished childhood : ' Somehow the sun does not seem to shine so brightly as it used ; the trackless meadows of old time have shrunk and dwindled away to a few poor acres. A saddening doubt, a dull suspicion, creeps over me. *Et in Arcadia ego*—I certainly did once inhabit Arcady.' Here the wheel has come full circle. That which was once outside—not *here* ; not *now*—has suffered the very extremity of change, and has dwindled down to nothing but a man's own memories of his past. Personally, I do not find it an improvement. I myself still prefer an Arcady that is elsewhere ; that, though it be but a place as rocky and barren as was the Arcadia of Polybius, is yet, in theory, attainable, because it is space only, and not unconquerable time, that separates us from it.

Old Thomas Burnet, in his *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, the only work I know to explain scientifically the breakdown of the original Golden Age, boldly asserts that the Deluge was responsible for all our present troubles : it had, he says, so tilted the axis of the earth that its plane of rotation is no longer in proper relation to that of the sun. It is unnecessary to go into all this here, but the upshot of it is that this dislocation has caused us to have four seasons, all different, the uneven nature of which, by overtaxing the ' springs ' by which the human frame adapts itself to changes in the climate, makes us wear out a good deal quicker than we were accustomed to do in the days of Methuselah. The notion of a single and perpetual season, similar to May or June, is an admirable one, and I am all in favour of it. If we really wish for the return of the Age of Gold, we might do well to stop pinning our faith either to past Arcadias or future Utopias, and should instead apply our best energies to a simple rearrangement of the pole of the earth's rotation. To the atomic scientist such an enterprise ought not to appear unduly onerous. Indeed, if we proceed as we seem to be doing, we may well find some day that we have solved all our problems and stumbled back blindly into Arcady. Only perhaps nobody will be there to enjoy it !

A Contest of Ladies

A Summer Idyll

BY WILLIAM SANSOM

FRED MORLEY might easily have been mistaken for something of an eccentric. He was a 'bachelor,' he was 'wealthy,' he was 'retired from the stage.' It was not held unusual for such a man to be somewhat out of line with the rest of the world.

Nor, because he was a bachelor, was it unusual that a certain July evening found him in his bedroom wandering from door to window, from bed to fireplace, wondering what to do. Many evenings found him so—with the warm nights and in the dangerous flush of middle-age.

He looked at the metal plaque of bells by his bed. 'Chambermaid.' 'Waiter.' But he knew that if he rang, neither would come. His eye dropped to the telephone beneath—there were buttons which led to 'Reception' and 'Restaurant' and 'Toilet Saloon': again he knew there would be no response. He wondered—as he had done so very often in the past—whether he really would have liked a response, had this been possible. But he quickly put that old idea from his mind, he was much happier as things were.

Up on the pink satin wall-paper, in a discreet position, was inset a white celluloid notice: a scramble of black lettering begged visitors to do this or not to do that. Morley's empty mind passed to all the other empty rooms around and above him, all with the same small notice bowing and begging—for the wording of these notices was polite and obsequious, a cut above the terse commercial command—by each closed door.

Downstairs the lounge would be empty. Magazines would be arranged neatly on a central table—*Country Life*, *The Gas Times*, *The Tatler*—and the curtains would be still undrawn to let a blue evening light through on to a great splay of fresh-bought lupins.

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Across from the empty lounge the bar would stand open and brightly polished—and empty too. At this thought old Morley brightened. Thank goodness—no one in the best chair, no chattering gin-groups, no idle guests to be sauntered into. No porter on the doorstep to mar the evening with a 'Good evening' and a searching eye. Fred Morley knew he could stand alone on the step and survey what he wished, undisturbed and in silence. He brightened. Such people might have meant company. But was such company preferable to his own selected privacy? By all means no.

By what means? What sort of hotel was this—all trim and in working order, yet absolutely empty of people? Not empty as death, not dust-covered and cobweb-hung—but fresh-swept, with the feeling that a dozen servants had only a moment before left. It was as one might imagine a live hotel struck by plague, or conjured up in some ghost-tale, or in some unknown way emptied yet set sailing equipped on its course like the maddening *Marie Celeste*.

A hotel bought by Morley? A hotel occupied entirely by Morley?

Almost. But in fact it was not a hotel at all. It was Morley's private house—decorated, in many of its more obvious features, like a hotel. This was Morley's 'eccentricity.' But was it, on closer consideration, so very eccentric? It is commonly a habit of furnishers and decorators to make things appear what they are not. Rooms—particularly of the well-to-do—have become escapes. The *chinoiserie* of Chippendale, sea-shell lairs of the rococo nymph, even the Greek revival—all have succeeded to make rooms what they are not. There have been Tudor cocktail-bars and Elizabethan garages, ship's-cabin beer-houses land-locked in a city street, chintzy cottage-rooms whose spinning-wheels shudder as the underground trains worm their way beneath. All of them studios of desire, each room an escape from four walls.

Morley's fancy to make his house look like a hotel was in fact less exotic than these. It was no vague wish to be different, it was a practical planned escape. A deep disaffection in him—the same that had left him a bachelor—had revolted against the idea of house-and-home. Given a homely-looking home he would feel home-bound, anchored, done. But hotels! These he loved—he felt in them adventure, the passage of possibility, a lovely rootless going and coming, excitement stalking the corridors, sin lurking

in the shadows of the fire extinguishers. They reminded him, too, of his touring days in the theatre. But against this stood the truth that hotels were in fact dreadfully uncomfortable: and homes were not. Hence—most reasonably—the transposition. He had dressed his seven-bedroomed mansion on the front of this rakish Channel seaside resort in a glamorous nostalgia for no-home.

Thus at six-thirty he sat and gazed his handsome eyes about the room and wondered what to do. Six-thirty is a bad hour. Hour of sundowners. Hour when the human beast, old moon-monkey, awakes to the idea of night. Hour of day's death and dark's beginning, uneasy hour of change. Bedrooms stalk with people changing clothes, drinks are drunk, high teas eaten, limbs washed fresh of used daylight. No wonder Fred Morley wondered, like millions around him, what to do. A stall at the Hippodrome? A sole at the Ship? Oysters at Macey's? A glass with old Burgess? A stroll by the Band—strains of the *Rosenkavalier* across green breakwaters, the dying sands? A tinkle to Mrs. Vereker—though it wasn't really His Night?

But none of these appealed. So, old bachelor that he was, he decided to pamper himself. His hand, strong, freckled, mildly arthritic, flashed its opal ring round the telephone dial. To a waiter at a real hotel some doors away his actor's accent, from between handsome curling lips and through teeth white and strong, ordered oysters and mulligatawny soup and what—oh, pigeon pie? Excellent. And a good dollop of Stilton, thank you. Wine he had, and plenty of port. Down went the receiver—above his clean square jaw the lips silently smacked—and with erect leisurely strides his legs took him over to the bathroom. A good hot bath, plenty of lather. Then, in grace to a good quiet evening at home, the raisin-red frogged smoking jacket.

Morley had played the romantic lead in most of the more robust musical comedies. He had toured for twenty years the length and breadth of the Isles in the boots of a Hussar, the breeches of a Desert Hero, the golden robes of Bagdad. He had made his money, saved it, and retired. Now as he strode his ample carpets he was still every inch a baritone. The theatrical years had stylised every manly gesture, incised surety into every feature of his square strong face, greyed not at all the good brown curly hair brushed suavely back and half sideways. And now as he undid his stays the deep and tuneful voice that had quickened hearts

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throughout the land broke into satisfied strains that declared how Maud was to come into the garden since the Big Bat Night had flown.

But, of course, the Big Bat Night was really at that time flying in : and with it, on the evening train, there had flown in six ladies new to the town—a Miss Clermont-Ferrand, the Misses Amsterdam and Rotterdam, Miss Sauerkraut of Nuremburg, Miss Civitavecchia and Miss Great-Belt of Denmark. Every summer the Town Corporation organised a Contest of Beauty. This year, spreading its festive wings, it had decided to make the Contest international. Invitations had been despatched. In some cases accepted. Part of the result, who had been rallied in London by their various agencies, had been sent down by the evening train.

Now they stood in the Railway Buffet studying little lists of recommended hotels and sipping, with wonder and wary enthusiasm, their watery-milked sweet cups of railway tea. The names of the hotels stared up at them with promise but nonentity. There were no Ritzes, no Savoy's, none of the ordinary run. There were Ships and Crescents and Royals and many lesser establishments, listed as Boarding Houses, with Gaelic, Celtic and sometimes Malayan names. All the ladies had different ideas and different purses, and all talked at once.

A group of local gentlemen sat drinking whisky and listening. These were a convivial lot, mixed commercials and retired front-walkers, black trilbies or stiff-collar tweeds. They spent most of the time ponderously pulling each other's legs ; but now with such a sudden advent of beautiful ladies, they went further. They went a bit silly. They giggled, they whispered, they mouthed and winked—the ladies, accompanied by the whisky, went straight to their heads.

Thus it was inevitable that sooner or later a sally would arch itself out at the ladies. It came very soon : an idea not indeed original, for it involved a well-tried local joke, flashed through the black trilby, the hair-grease, the hair and into the little grey cells of one of the fat red-faced commercials.

Lifting his hat, he sweated towards the ladies :

‘Excuse my intruding upon yourselves, ladies—but I cannot

help but see where you're not fixed up with your hotel. Now if you was to ask me—that is as I am the local man, I've lived here thirty years now—I wonder if you'd know where I'd say you'd be as best fixed up?'

He paused and looked from one to the other of those girls, eyebrows raised in huge surprise. These various girls winced, or looked away, or primped fascinated at him. He then said, sharply, with lips terse to keep a straight face:

'I'd say you'd best go to Morley's.'

A gasp, quickly suppressed, from the other men. They were adept at the grave concealing face.

The ladies looked from one to the other, then at their lists. They said there was no mention of Morley's.

The man in the trilby rose instantly to this:

'And that's where you ladies hit the nail on its head. Morley's you won't find on no list. Morley's is more . . .' he waved his hands, screwing up his eyes and searching for just that one word which would do justice to the exquision he proposed ' . . . more what you call *select*.'

One of the tweeded gentlemen, removing his pipe from his mouth like a stopper, said gravely: 'Morley's is a *private* hotel.'

'Number Thirty-two, Marine Parade,' another said. 'Not five minutes.'

Those jolly men then fell to in earnest. Morley's was this, Morley's was that. Once warmed up they discovered subtleties of compliment one would never have suspected; they even began to argue among themselves. In short, the ladies were at length convinced, a street-plan was quickly sketched showing the way to Number Thirty-two, and, gamely swallowing their tea, they left for Fred Morley's house.

One or two, Miss Great-Belt for one, wished inwardly to show her personal superiority by choosing a more grandly named hotel (there was indeed a Bristol, a name as hallowed as the Ritz) but on practical thought it seemed wiser in a strange land at first to stick together.

One of the gentlemen started up to escort them: but was quickly dissuaded by a furtive shake of the head from the ring-leader. Let matters take their course. It might be tempting to watch old Fred Morley's face; but if any one of them were seen the game would be given away.

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Such was the preposterous situation when those six Beauty Queens rang the door of Mr. Morley's house. That fact is stranger than fiction has been often observed—but seldom believed. We like the ordinary, it is more restful, and liking it tend to close our eyes to the bewilderment of chance and coincidence that otherwise would strike us every minute of the day.

In the case of these six Beauty Queens, the glove of coincidence might have fitted all the more neatly if, for instance, the waiter who had brought Fred Morley's supper had just at that moment been about to leave the house. A uniformed servant would have perfected an otherwise passable illusion. But in fact that waiter had not even arrived by the time those girls pulled the bell. And it was Morley himself, in his raisin-red smoking jacket, who finally opened the door.

'Come into the gar—den M——' he still sang, and then stood stupefied.

'We would like some rooms,' said Miss Great-Belt, who like many Danes spoke English well. 'Have you any to spare?'

Since those girls were Beauty Queens, they were passably beautiful. To Fred Morley the vision of their six faces framed in his doorway like singers at some strange summer carol-feast both bewildered him and set his mind working at an unusual rate.

The Misses Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and the two Latins Civitavecchia and Clermont-Ferrand, now followed by saying in many mixed words that for their part double rooms would do. Morley had a further second's freedom for thought. It did not occur to him that these girls were part of a joke that had in fact been played once or twice before. Beauty seldom suggests fun. His mind instead remembered that the town was full, that these girls were probably tramping from door to door hoping for rooms in a private house, that this was difficult since they were so large a party, that it was pitiable that people should be in such a predicament, that it was the more so since they were beautiful people, that he had a large house, that it was largely empty, and . . . why not?

He bowed and opened the door wider for the ladies to pass:

'Certainly, Madame,' he said, wondering what the plural could be, '. . . I should be delighted to accommodate you.'

They scarcely bothered to thank him, but moved brusquely into what was patently the vestibule of a hotel. In fact, that eccentric decoration hardly mattered. As foreign visitors they

would never have questioned an ordinary homely hall : it would simply have looked part of the mad English scene.

'La fiche?' asked Miss Clermont-Ferrand.

'Ah, oui,' Morley smiled, having no idea what this could mean. And added, as a pleasantry : 'Sanfaryan.'

'Vraiment?' smiled back Miss Clermont-Ferrand, impressed by such liberty.

But Morley then thought : By Jiminy I'll have to get moving. And raised his hand to command attention, and asked them kindly to wait a moment, and scuttled upstairs. He ran—striding now no longer—to the telephone by his bed and breathlessly called the restaurant to order not one but seven dinners. In half an hour. And then raced round the bedrooms. Fortunately these were kept made up : two double rooms, a good single room and a single dressing-room. One of these had already been slept in by guests on the previous weekend. He pulled the sheets back, smoothed out a crease or two, decided to risk it. But airing? Six hot-water bottles? Impossible. He ran round lighting with little pops gas-fire after gas-fire. Then he thought : Bathrooms ! And banged open the door of the second bathroom, removed his rowing machine, a Hoover, some dirty linen and his golf-clubs : then rushed to his own to wipe off the comfortable soap-ring left only half an hour before.

In that fine old actor's frame there coursed a sort of boyish exaltation. For nearly nothing would he have disturbed the repose of his calm dinner alone : but for such a six . . . well, it hardly happened every night. He had no designs. He was simply exhilarated, flowing with the good red blush of boyishness. He felt chivalrous, too. No snake of desire but simply the flushes of virtue filled him.

He descended to take the ladies up to their rooms.

The oysters were laid out on seven plates, the ladies had been allocated their seats round the large table in the dining-room, and he himself, having seen that seven portions of pigeon pie were keeping hot in the kitchen, was at last on the point of sitting himself down—when, in the general delight at the sight of oysters, Miss Great-Belt spoke out :

'Oysters ! This is very good !' she said, wondering at the same

time what the charges of so considerable a hotel might be. 'But it was good luck indeed those gentlemen recommended us such a hotel!'

Morley's hand was actually on his chair to pull it back. Instead, he pulled back his hand.

'Recommended? Hotel?'

A sudden spasm gripped him where a moment before the gastric juices had begun to play.

'Surely yes,' Miss Great-Belt smiled. 'Some gentlemen in the railway bar. They said this is the best hotel we can have.' Then she added with a knowing smile, a condescension to the servant standing above her, 'But they will come quick enough for their percentage, no?'

'No?' Morley stuttered. 'Oh, yes, yes.'

The old joke! This time it had come off! His chivalry blew away like old hot air. He saw suddenly that he was in a very difficult position—he was a fraud. These ladies were deceived. They might be very angry. And more. He was a bachelor. Alone in his house, he had induced them to come inside. What would the world make of *that*? What would the neighbours, what would the Town Council, what would even the Courts of Law think? Was it legal? Were there seduction laws? Certainly there were Boarding House Licences.

These and more terrors mounted in his mind. With regret he let his hand fall absolutely from the chair, then sculpted it round towards his plate of oysters, already beginning to act the part of a real hotel employee. He muttered that he did not know why an extra place had been laid and began to withdraw the oysters to take and to eat them in the sanctity of the kitchen, in what now must be his right and proper place. For he had decided to play the rôle out. For the moment it was the only thing to do. At all costs avert suspicion, a scene, the full fury of these now formidable girls.

His hand was about to grasp the plate—but Miss Civitavecchia's lizard-swift, was quicker:

'Piacere—do not trouble. It is plain,' she said, smiling round at the others, 'that we can eat some more?'

'Please place this on the bill,' she added.

Morley tried to smile and withdrew, oysterless, to the empty kitchen. Some minutes later he took care to bring only six soup-platesful of mulligatawny into the dining-room.

The dining-table had been laid with only one pepper-pot, one salt-cellar. The ladies required more. Morley, his soup and now his lonely pigeon growing cold, had to search for, fill, and serve others. Vinegar was required. And oil. And in the matter of drinks there was white wine, red wine, beer and water to be found for different tastes. Morley was run off his feet. His hurriedly gulped pigeon flew instantly back at him. And on top of all this he found it necessary, on being questioned, to invent excuses for the quietness of the 'hotel' and for the non-appearance of other servants.

Only later, when at last he had seen the last of the ladies mount the stairs—tired from their travels, they all went up early—only later when the front door was locked and with waiter-tired feet he lay in bed, did he allow himself at last a great retrogressive chuckle.

He saw suddenly how he lay there on his back like a dear old daddy-keeper, with his six young charges all tucked safely up sleeping blissfully on their six pillows. Six sudden beautiful girls at first look all of a piece. Only after a while, when the first endazzlement is over, can one distinguish between them. Now still to Morley they were banded indistinguishable, six little beauties all in a row, as if that beauty itself served the uniform purpose of a school hat and a gym frock.

And so there he lay, hoary old guardian of his exquisite crocodile, and chuckled, and gradually—not knowing what might happen in the morning, too tired now to care—fell asleep.

In the morning, reason asserted itself. Such a fantastic situation could not be allowed to continue. He considered for a moment applying for a boarding-house licence, hiring servants: but this was plainly too much trouble. And plainly it extended the falsity of the situation.

His daily housekeeper supplied the answer. He rose early to intercept her. He explained that he had given sanctuary the night before to six roofless ladies. The housekeeper froze. Morley pretended not to notice and asked her to prepare six breakfasts. The housekeeper pressed her lips together. Morley acted a laugh.

'An—er—equivocal position for an old bachelor, eh, Mrs.

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Laidlaw?' his lips laughed. 'But safety in numbers, Mrs. L, safety in numbers.'

This simple remark had a far greater effect than Morley could have hoped for. The word 'equivocal' put Mrs. Laidlaw momentarily off her balance, it rescued Morley again into the status of the Master. But then that 'safety in numbers' in its turn saved her own comfort of mind, it sank her happily to earth, it was comfortable and what it said was what other people said all the world over. She served the breakfasts, hypnotised by the saying, muttering it over and over to herself. Only some hours later, when she had digested the good looks and the alien chic of the ladies' clothes, whorish to her woollen eyes, did she give notice.

But long before that Morley had waylaid Miss Amsterdam, who was first down. Miss Amsterdam was a dark-haired Hollander, possibly a descendant of the Spanish occupation. Most of her was covered with long dark hairs—but her face shone out from among the cropping like a lovely pale brown moon. She came hurrying down the stairs, and was already across the hall, between the ever-open cocktail bar and the ever-empty lounge, almost to the door, handbag swinging like a third buttock, before Morley could stop her. But he came striding on with great actor's strides, calling: 'Excuse me! Miss . . . Miss . . .?'

'Call me Amsterdam.'

'Oh? . . . Well, by all means . . .'

Leading her aside into the lupined lounge he made an unclean breast of it all. The word 'roofless' that he had by chance brought up to thaw Mrs. Laidlaw provided his key to a happy simulation of the truth. It conjured the pitiful idea of 'roofless' ladies, it implied an open door and an open heart to all the travel-stained abroad in the night in this his native country. He explained the hotel furnishings as mementoes of his own travels, his tours—offhandedly stressing, as a condiment of glamour, his place in the theatre—and finally begged Miss Amsterdam to excuse this whole misunderstanding that might so easily be taken as an impertinence on his, a bachelor's, part. Would she convey this to the other ladies, would they understand?

Miss Amsterdam's brown round lovely face went this way and that, it made shapes of surprise and petulance and tenderness and excitement—then finally all broke up into a wild pudding of laughter. Brown pudge of cheeks crinkling, eyes gone, brows

ridged, red mouth neighing never-seen underteeth—no more now than a big brown baby howling agonies of wind.

Slapping one hand across that mouth, and the other over her stomach, she tripped her lovely legs upstairs. And Fred Morley was left waiting—for was this laughter or hysteria?—on his uneasy tenterhooks.

From upstairs silence.

A long silence. A silence in a lonely downstairs when the upstairs is full but behind closed doors. Creaks of silence, rafters loaded with words.

But—ten minutes later all was over. On the landing a door burst open and laughter, like water from a thirsty tap, laved out and down the stairs. Morley heaved a long and blessed relief.

With the laughter came the ladies—all six, all smiles. They milled in and stood in a semi-circle round old Fred Morley, who rose and gravely bowed. Miss Amsterdam broke instantly:

‘Mr. Morley—I have told all the girls all you have told me and all of us girls have agreed together you are a kind and a big sweet.’

‘We thank you,’ dimpled Miss Rotterdam, a round blonde cheese of a girl.

‘Comme c’est infiniment drôle . . .’ giggled Clermont-Ferrand, who, in trousers and a checked shirt, but with a wicked fringe and a golden anklet, appeared to be a woman on two levels or layers—a check shirt cowgirl of St. Germain enclosing a Nana of more liberal boulevards.

‘Such a dinner!’ sighed with wondering shakes of her head the practical Miss Nuremberg. This one, who held the annual title, comic to the English but a beautiful reality to the German, of Miss Sauerkraut, had in her pallid tall glory exactly the texture of that well-prepared vegetable. A dab of rotkohl would not have harmed her cheeks.

Miss Civitavecchia took a deep breath and began, palms outstretched: ‘Ma—ma Mi—a!’ And went on, for a long time, expending in a tumult of Italian the full breath of her bosom. On the solid foundations of a Roman body, she carried the small head of a snake: it was as if some lovely Laocoon had been fused with the bust—and bust is meant—of a great—and great is intended—Roman Empress.

So Fred Morley stood overwhelmed by this crescent before him of beauty, smiles and gratitude. He felt, and for the moment

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was, loved. A pleasant sensation. But, as an Englishman, he was embarrassed . . . and through the glow of pleasure his instinct was to escape by offering them all a drink. This was on his lips—when Miss Great-Belt at last spoke up.

Miss Great-Belt was plainly the most beautiful of all. Her present title embraced that royal reach of sea separating the Danish islands of Funen and Zealand, and to no dimension of her own. She was a dark red-head. Her skin white over lilac. Her eye deep dark blue. Her whole face the face of a cat—round high cheekbones, nearly no nose, many small teeth curving in a long smile like the dream of a bite: yet all squared into the face of a girl. How could she have become so? Copenhagen is a great seaport through which have passed many strange fathers. Whatever . . . there she was, a brilliant cat-faced red-head, who might bite, who might smile, and who now was the only one to say a disaffected word:

‘How much do we owe?’ she said.

Practical? Or battle-cry? Fred Morley’s interest quickened. Confused by the compliments of the others, which made those ladies into no more than lovely willing sisters, his well-tried nose sniffed Woman. For the first time one among those beauties stood out separate.

‘I had hoped,’ he instantly said, ‘that in the circumstances you would accept my hospitality?’

Miss Great-Belt looked him calmly in the eye.

‘Thank you,’ she said, serene and ominously composed, ‘but that is impossible. Would you please be so kind as to tell us the charge?’

Of course, all the others had now to agree with her. All their various voices rose to insist. They chattered to each other and at Morley and he could not say a word. But he kept his eye on Miss Great-Belt. She had taken out her powder-puff and with aggravated unconcern dabbed her nose: he noticed with rising spirits that she used no mirror. It was a gesture. It meant war.

Finally it was settled that the ladies paid Morley a reasonable small sum per day. Later he telephoned the Town Hall to ask whether he might take in paying-guests. The clerks, for the town was overcrowded, were delighted. He arranged for service and food—after all, he said to himself, it would only be for two or three days. Then, much later, when all this was fixed, asked

Miss Great-Belt personally whether he might escort her round the town.

'No,' was the answer. With a straight look between the eyes.

All that was on the Thursday. The Contest was scheduled for the Saturday. For three in the afternoon at the Pier Aquadrome.

Thus, for these girls, there was much to be done. Much final furbishing. Polishing, paring, depilating and all the other many measures of massage and exercise necessary to bring tissues of flesh and hair—Fred Morley was heard with a weary chuckle later to say—to scratch. For in the course of these operations old Morley's eyes were opened.

Overnight the calm of his bachelor ménage was transformed. Those girls worked themselves hard. The rooms, the corridors, the bathrooms drifted in a dry flood of cosmetic cartons: balls of cotton wool and paper tissues mated with blonde, brunette and auburn curlings in every corner: powder flew everywhere, made solid marble shafts of the sunbeams: oil and cream made each empty surface—every table, every shelf—a viscose adventure.

Masseuses and masseurs—brisk women and strange men—came and went: Morley, to lighten the load on his new temporary staff, and because he spent much time nervously wandering and waiting downstairs, answered the door to a ceaseless stream of such visitors and the slick peremptory drivers of delivery vans. He tried as far as possible to avoid going upstairs. Things upstairs were too strange. He had found Miss Clermont-Ferrand sitting with her head in her beautiful hands and each elbow cupped in the half of a lemon. Across the landing there had whisked a blue kimono topped by a face plastered livid dry pink, with hollows it seemed where the eyes might be and naked lips huge now as a clown's, a face terribly faceless—too late he had seen that this might be Miss Great-Belt. Then Miss Rotterdam, in a bathing-dress, had come bumping across the landing on her bottom, and vanished into bathroom: no hands nor legs, she had explained *en route*—a question of stomach muscles. Miss Sauerkraut liked to lie on the balcony on half a ping-pong table, head-downwards. Miss Civitavecchia he had found carefully combing the long black beards that hung from her armpits, a peninsular speciality: unlike Miss Amsterdam, who took no such Latin pride in the strong

growth of dark hair that covered most of her—it seemed that whenever he asked for her the answer came : ‘ Upstairs shaving.’

So Morley remained downstairs.

He sat there with a whisky and soda, half impatient, half amused, but more simply apprehensive of what else might come. He sat listening, cocking his head anxiously at the bumps and scufflings that came from above, and answering the doorbell.

But above all the question of Miss Great-Belt lightly, but persistently, tormented him. He was quite conscious of his middle years, and of her youth—yet after all was he not Frederick Morley, the idol of a thousand hearts ? He felt affronted : a smile perhaps, a gracious gesture would have been enough to appease him. But this—what was it called—*snootiness* ! Beyond the Fred Morley in him, the male rose in combat. Something must be done.

Yet was this attitude of hers exactly *snooty* ? He wondered whether it might run deeper. It lacked the proper coquetry. It was the result, perhaps, more of a solid and almost matronly composure unusual in a so strikingly beautiful young girl. She had an air of remarkable self-containedness. When she walked, it was always with a sense of destination : she knew where she was going. When she carried parcels, one felt those parcels would never be undone in a flurry but would each await its proper time. There was a feeling of unhurried *process* about her. Though she bore the fiercely beautiful face of a cat, she was phlegmatic—but then perhaps a cat is, despite some appearances, the most phlegmatic of animals ?

Later that evening—it had been a beautiful, if indeed a long day—he watched her leave the house arm-in-arm with Miss Sauerkraut. Their summer dresses clung coolly in the evening air to what must have been naked bodies, and the tall swanlike Sauerkraut served only to emphasise Miss Great-Belt’s warm pliabilitys. The two paused outside the door, then turned one way down the westering front. Two youths in padded flannels detached themselves from the group that lounged now always discreetly over the road from his front door, and at a suitable distance followed, eyes intent, mouths whetting for the whistles that would come.

The cavalier rose in Morley ; but he quieted it. Then, pair by pair, he watched the others go. Each was followed by two, sometimes three, of the watching gentlemen. And then he was left alone in the house. At last—peace. He breathed a great

sigh of peace. But to himself, and for himself. It was a false sigh. He knew that in a very few minutes the house would feel too empty. And so it did. He wandered for some time from room to room fingering things, sitting for a while here and then there. But he kept thinking of all those who had left, so young and expectant, to enjoy the evening—and he began to feel his years. That would never do. His bachelordom had taught him all about self-commiseration—and it was his custom to guard against it. He selected a hat, a curl-brimmed panama, pale but not too pale for evening wear, and left for the Club. The stolid usuality, the pot-belly of male companionship was what he needed.

The Yacht Club was not much frequented by yachtsmen. A few faded photographs of old racing-cutters spinnakered across the cream-painted, nautically planked walls. Well-polished brass shone here and there, and to seaward one wall of the lounge was given to good white-framed observatory glass. However, it was now a place mostly of comfortable horsehair where members, the elect of the town, might come and drink.

The warm fruity smell of gentlemen at ease greeted Fred Morley as he entered the lounge: tobacco smoke, fumes of whisky and port, horsehair and something else—starch, red flesh, woollen underpants?—ballooned out its bouquet of security across the Turkey carpet. Here at last was escape from all feminine essences! He rang the bell for a drink and, giving a wink or a nod to various members couched in the horsehair, joined a group at the further end.

‘Why if it isn’t Fred!’

‘Come in, Fred—we was just about to ’ave a round of Kiss-in-the-Ring.’

For it had already got about that Fred Morley had some young ladies staying in his house. Young ladies of the theatrical profession, it was presumed.

Those who now addressed Fred were a mixed bag of the livelier, wealthier citizens of the town—a couple of aldermen, a big butcher, a retired military man well-invested in beach and fairground concessions, the local brewer’s brother-in-law. They were an affable, energetic, powerful lot. As far as they were allowed, they ran the town—not too unfairly. Mixed of the professional and tradesmen’s classes, they forgot such differences in a close-masonry of

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well-to-do malehood ; they even included some of the now not so well-to-do, on grounds that they had once been so—those only were excluded who had not yet come solidly up in the world. They were a cut above those other bantering gentlemen who in the first place had sent his six guests to Morley—yet they too always affected a jovial banter between themselves.

For some time Fred Morley sipped his whisky and warmed his marrow at the hands of these gentlemen. Then a Mr. Everett Evans came in. Everett Evans, since he was both an alderman, a prosperous draper, and a local bright spark, had been appointed chairman of the judicial committee that was to sit upon the Beauty Queens. Conversation had already turned upon this coming event. Morley had kept his mouth immaculately shut. But now Evans himself had come in.

‘Hallo, hallo—look who comes here !’ called this group of men.

‘What you having, Everett ?’ they then said.

‘Large bicarbonate and soda, thank you,’ answered Mr. Evans.

‘For Evans’ sake !’

‘That’s just what. For the sake of poor Evans’s poor belly, that’s what.’ He paused and looked mystified. Then : ‘Know what I’ve been drinking last twenty-four hours ?’

They had fallen into amused, expectant silence. Evans’s chin went out, he looked at each of them accusingly, then let his eyes bulge as he blurted :

‘Barium.’

‘Barium ?’

‘No lie. Barium. Little white glassfuls of bloody barium.’

‘What the hell . . . ?’

‘First they strip you. Then they put you in a kind of a smock affair, apron you might call it—with bloody lacing up the back. They let you keep your socks on—but them laces, bows all down the back, bows all over your arse come to that.’ He paused for breath, the others were looking startled.

And then he went on : ‘That’s the start of it. So you’re left there all buttons and bows reading your old copy of *Punch*. Then they say come in, and in you go in a big dark black room and then you get your barium. Whole glassful. First thing down your gullet for twelve hours. Metal, it is. Tastes like ice-cream carton.’

Another breath :

‘Then they do you.’

'Do you?' The gentlemen leaned forward, uneasy. 'Do you?'

'Take your photo. The old X-ray.'

Now breaths of relief, tittering. But Evans raised his hand:

'No laughing matter, I tell you. Ulcers, that's what I've got. Stomach ulcers. You know when I've been feeling bad these last months—since Christmas like? The old sawbones says he's worried I might have something proper dicky down below and sends me along to this hospital for the photo. Well, they found 'em all right. Ulcers. No lie.'

'And what's more I got more photos to be took—taken like. And 'ow the 'ell I'm going to look all these bathing bellies in the face I don't know.'

Everett Evans looked down sadly into his glass of soda. Little bubbles raced up at him, burst at him.

'Day after tomorrow it is. I can't do it. Someone'll 'ave to stand in for me.'

He looked up suddenly and glared round the company.

'Well?' he said, vicious, 'any offers?'

All those men now looked at each other nervously. They simpered. Not one but secretly would have loved being up lording it over so many Beauties. But there had been too many jokes about the 'Bellies' already, each man saw himself up there on the platform blushing and being laughed at. So now all began rapidly to mumble excuses—jolly excuses, for seriousness would be suspect. 'The old woman'd never forgive me.' 'What—me with a grown-up daughter?' 'Think of my poor old heart.'

Except for Morley. Through Morley's mind there flashed a sudden sunlight. Here it was—on a platter! Here was the prize for Miss Great-Belt! And he—with a courteous smile—presenting it! She'd eat out of his hand! He gave a great cough.

They all looked at him. He said nothing, coughed again, looked particularly at no one and nothing.

It worked.

'The very man! Why did no one think?'

'Love's young dream! Be like falling off a log, eh, Fred? Busman's holiday.'

Everett frowned at him, the only one severe: 'Well, Fred—how about it? I can fix it—'

'Mm,' Fred said, looking out through the big marine windows. The sea was dotted here and there with little boats. Their sails

took the last evening sun. He did not see them. 'I don't know that I'm doing anything that afternoon, nothing special . . .'

'I'll fix it then, Fred.' Everett pressed his lips, fixing, together.

'We—ell——,' mused Fred.

'But,' said the one man there who knew, 'is this right? With some of them staying there in his house?'

'What!' This was news. They all dug him in the ribs—with their eyes, their great laughing teeth. 'Old rascal!' 'There's a dark horse!'

'Yes,' Fred sighed, more than ever casual, 'I've got six of them.'

'Safety in numbers then,' hissed Everett Evans, 'that fixes it.'

'But,' said that one man again.

'Now look 'ere,' Evans exploded, 'Fred had more skirt in 'is life than you've 'ad 'ot dinners. Think six little bellies mean a thing to Fred? You're off your rocker! I tell you I can fix this easy.'

In any case those other men, accustomed to the pulling of wires, were hardly worried by prospects of collusion. This now suited them. It made things easy. Fred was the man. They all agreed.

'Well, Fred, shall I fix it?' said Everett.

Morley made one final hesitation, for form's sake. He pursed his lips, ruminated, then suddenly sharply nodded. 'All right then. I'll do it.'

'Good boy,' rose ulcerous Evans. 'Lead me to the blower. This needs fixing right now.'

And so it was fixed.

It was a different Fred Morley who sat downstairs the next morning in deference to the upstairs pandemonium. From bar to lounge to front door he walked—but this time with a glint in his eye, a chuckling of hands together, sometimes the tum-tumty-tum of a little song. She may touch her toes and waggle herself and knead herself like dough, he thought—ha, *knead* herself, who'll she be needing next, eh? He blew a kiss upstairs to the invisibly exercising Great-Belt. Old Fred Morley and none other! Tum-ti-tumty-tum. And outside it was a beautiful morning, the sun shone. Old Fred Morley? Old me Aunt Fanny! Forty-eight if a day. Middle-age. And no spread.

Nor was it quite the same upstairs that morning as the day

before. Those girls had had their Bikinis delivered : some were too big, some too small. Tall pale Sauerkraut became too high a goddess in hers too big : Miss Amsterdam, her brown skin cooing against the new white slips ordained by the Council but alas too small, went into a corner and attached with the vigour of a true Hollander various appealing frills of her own—and of course there was a row about that. And of course the girls had by now survived their first affability—they were getting each others' measure. Some had seen others at something, others had heard some say this or that. Sides were taken, embattlements formed. But between squalls and bickering a sense of dignity prevailed. No one actually touched anyone else.

Meanwhile out on the front, on the blue sea—all was plain sailing. It was lovely weather and the sea lay smoothly sparkling blue. White paint of pier and railing stood freshly deadly clean against all that blue and the colours of people, boats, cars, kites—and Fred Morley had an idea. He sent, by the new and overpaid and delighted maid, messages up to the ladies Rotterdam and Clermont-Ferrand. Would they do him the honour of a stroll and an aperitif before luncheon?

All he thought was : 'They're nice girls. I'd like a stroll. I've better plans for the Danish lass, let her bide (and it'll perhaps do her good).'

Rotterdam and Clermont-Ferrand—the one butterflying her arms to raise further her already sturdy breasts, the other sitting in front of a mirror practising 'facial yoga'—that is making grotesque narcissist kisses at herself to exercise the mouth, then pecking her head forward twenty times a minute like a little hen on her bright young egg—read their messages with approval and half an hour later those two were one on each of Fred Morley's arms strolling the Front. Morley in a faultlessly raffish suit of biscuit tussore, with a high stiff collar, a pin in his tie and a curl to his hat : Miss Rotterdam blonde in flowered silk that wisped round her so closely in the breeze that those following could see not only the lovely knobbles of her vertebræ but the knobbles of her suspender-belt too : Miss Clermont-Ferrand in high white shoes and a strange white belt almost taller than its breadth round her no-waist, black hair flowing, black silk buttocks a-swing, preposterously and magnificently French.

Rotterdam in her friendly Dutch way, which concealed heaven knew what guile, had taken Morley's arm to draw his attention

to a group of young men playing cricket on the sands below. 'You English,' she had laughed, pressing her round gums back into her teeth, making enormous dimples, and giving Morley's arm a niccely squeeze. All of which Clermont-Ferrand immediately, and fiercely, noticed—so that not to be outdone she had taken the other arm, pulling Fred's interest towards a sombre green-painted glass wind shelter: 'Why do you have autobus shelters,' she asked, in innocence of the normal weather prevailing on such a parade, 'when you have no autobuses?' And panted up a charming little laugh to him that also implied 'Oh you dear mad Englishman.' But at the same time panted her mouth itself, open and eager, red-lipped and wetly pink inside, teeth laughing wide and tongue-tip pointing right out at him very close to his startled eyes.

So Fred had them both hugged on his arms. He puffed his chest with a deep breath of the good clear sea-air of morning and felt, there in the sunlight with sea to the left and bright traffic to the right, with the Cliff Memorial Gardens pine-green ahead and the white pier-dome flashing all holiday joy, good to be alive.

It was in such style that he was observed, a little further on, by those same local gentlemen who had first sent him the girls. These locals moved in a group: just then they had moved that group, bellies eased and jolly with good morning beer, from the brass-flashing doors of a nearby saloon to take a breather of sea-air before the next. But when they saw Fred they gaped, their spirits gravened and sank. For they were in that least enviable of situations—that of the practical joker who slips on his own banana-skin, that of him who is laughed at last. Yes, it had gone wrong all right. There was Fred sitting pretty, with *two*, with a blondie and a blackie, one of each kind, one to suit whatever his fancy was, turn and turn about—and they had put this in his way! They had actually been such damned idiots as to send him that choice handful he had there! Not thinking, not dreaming to keep the handful for themselves, and send it somewhere quiet round the corner where they might call later to pass the time of day . . . Oh well, they supposed it was the booze again, that's what it was. Can't have everything. But—that it should be Fred! Fred whom always secretly they had envied, Fred who'd had it on a platter all his life, bags of it, oodles of it there on his stage-doorstep whichever way he might turn . . . while *they* . . .

Now to Fred passing with a beauty on each arm they raised

their hats and gave grim fixed smiles, new white teeth and old yellow ones flashing in the sun : to which Fred Morley, deeply satisfied, bowed and passed on his triumphant way.

Yet those gentlemen would not have been so discomforted had they seen him an hour hence. For matters did not continue so well. In the first place, those girls were young and active, they were out to enjoy themselves and not content at all simply to take the morning air. Also, as foreigners, they were inquisitive, they wanted to taste the oddities of this strange new country. So that soon Clermont-Ferrand had dragged them to a fish-and-chip booth that lay just below down some steps : and she walked now with newspaper in one hand and a chip in the other, fish-oil lustrous all over her lipstick and powdered chin. And Rotterdam had asked for a small propeller on a coloured stick, which she waved fluttering high, while firmly her other fist clasped a long thick truncheon of pink peppermint rock. They giggled bending, pointing, nudging, giving high shrieks of awe and shock at so many strange things to see. With rock and fish-and-chips they had settled their feminine differences, now they were all for fun. And having discovered the livelier scenes of stalls and crowds beneath the arches of the Parade they dragged Morley from sweet-shop to pin-table, from whelk to winkle stand, from jellied-eel to ice-cream barrow. They took him on the Dodgem cars and they had him photographed with them in sailor hats standing in front of a huge cardboard fishing-smack. (The photographer, giving his rump a resounding whack, had cried : ' Another good smack gone to the bottom ! ') Loudly as Morley protested, the louder they laughed and the further they dragged him. They thought these were no more than the coy protestations of an elderly man enjoying himself.

Fred Morley had planned an aperitif on the terrace of the best hotel in the town, a terrace just overlooking the street and readily seen from there : he would have sat with his two beautiful guests and from that eminence with a drink in hand and a naughty glint in his eye enjoyed the envy of passers-by for the half-hour until luncheon. And then luncheon. Cold salmon, a bottle of the best, the white clean cloth, the silver and the laughter of these two pairs of lovely red lips. This had all gone wrong. Those girls had no time for luncheon. He was tired, jolted, hungry, thirsty. And he did not wish to be seen even up on the Marine Parade itself with two such high-spirited girls—who now wore

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each a hat with a large motto printed on it. Yet of course, when they had had enough of the beach, up they had to go.

And there, to cap everything, he saw approaching him Miss Great-Belt. Miss Great-Belt with her fine red hair and in an orange dress holding in one hand a towering stick of electric pink candy-floss, a wild mane of strident sugar which every so often she kissed with her bright carmine lips. In the other hand—and still she managed all this with no lessening of self-composure—she held the arm of a sleek young giant in a shirt of flowered American silk.

He nearly hated her. And it was then, at a moment of shame and dislike, that she made towards him her first affable gesture. She waved her great pink floss-stick with the benign gesture of passing royalty—then gave him a huge, long, tranquil wink! And then passed on.

When at last he was safely home, and when thus in comfort and at ease his temper had subsided—he still remembered that wink, reviewed it in a more benevolent light, and began to build up implications for it. Hope flowered. Wish welcomed fulfilment. It was plain her mood had turned, she had completed her feminine duties—the period of cat-and-mouse play laid down in the rules—and now she was blossomed and waiting. It only remained for him to pluck her.

So that an hour later, when he met her in the hall, he mentioned that he had a box at the Hippodrome that night. She had charmingly agreed to be his guest. At the theatre? At seven-thirty? Most kind. And supper afterwards. Delightful.

But at seven-thirty she was not at the theatre, nor at eight-thirty. He telephoned home. No, she was not in. She had gone out—to what? *What? To a dance?*

He slammed down the receiver and left, furious.

When she came in that night he was waiting for her. She came in early—for the next day was the day of the Contest, and she had to enjoy a long night's sleep—she came in a little breathless, her lovely red hair ablaze in the light, now with no pink candyfloss but in an evening dress the colour of the night sky. For a second when she saw him she hesitated: but instantly then gathered herself and came flouncing, almost on those tall legs

bouncing, along the hall, unperturbed as usual, a glint of disdain in her navy eyes, but her lips pouted in the beginning to smile. And as she came up to him she did smile.

'Good evening.'

Now it was he who played with composure.

'Good evening,' he said coldly. 'I missed you at the theatre.'

'The theatre? Of course—I'm so sorry. But you know—I really felt I could not come. To sit about all evening in a stuffy box! I needed exercise, you know. The great day tomorrow!'

'Indeed? And it was nothing that I waited a full hour for you?'

'I've said I am sorry.'

'And that is all?'

She said nothing. But looked at him curiously.

Then she asked: 'You really expected me?'

He looked surprised. 'Naturally.'

'Well *really*. You spend the morning with not one but *two* of these . . . these *women* upstairs. And then you expect to spend the evening with *me*? What do you think I am? What next? Shall I tell you what *you* are—you're an old satyr, that is what. A wolf! With pointed ears! With *hoofs*!'

She had raised her voice—he was so surprised he put up a hand to feel his ears—and then having reached her climax with the word 'hoofs,' which she blew at him with a mouth shaped for whoofing whole houses down, she was gone.

He stood there a moment amazed. Then his lips snapped shut. 'The Great Day tomorrow?' he said to himself. 'So be it.'

The Great Day dawned differently to those preceding. In the early hours, as from nowhere, great clouds blacker than the night had loomed up, flashed into fire, burst into water. Straight down, as if some celestial bucket had slopped over, the rains had fallen. Summer hails had swept the front. The temperature had fallen a swift ten degrees: then more. A wind had sprung up, gathering into a light steady gale. Until when dawn finally broke the Marine Parade lay drenched and grey, chilled and windy and drizzled, deserted and to remain so throughout a long wet cold day.

Morley had awoken in the night to hear the hailstones drum-

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ming and booming on the glass verandah roof below his window : and when at nine o'clock he went downstairs not at all well-slept, the house was grey and dead, no shafts of summer light livened the rooms, the blue lupins sat dusty like drab flowers in the corner of a dull boarding-house. Which this is, he savagely thought.

Yet it was hardly dull—for throughout the morning the sounds upstairs rose to a climax. Most of the girls were now not speaking to each other. But those who did yelled at the tops of their voices. Their frenzy in these last hours of preparation rose to new and furious levels. By twelve o'clock Morley could bear it no longer, he took his mackintosh off the peg and went out.

The air on the Parade was pleasanter than he had supposed. Forlorn, perhaps, the look of things—but there was a stimulating clarity abroad, a briskness of new air blown in from the sea. He looked across at the scudding waves, took deep breaths, and in between puddles stepped out briskly. Rain-soaked boats lay about the deserted beach like wrecks, a solitary figure in a mackintosh came swept by the wind down one street and disappeared up another.

This was exactly what Morley needed. He needed a change, he needed a breath of air. He was no longer angry with that Miss Great-Belt—he had lived too long to stay too deeply perturbed by such events—but only irritated : and that irritation included Miss Rotterdam and Miss Clermont-Ferrand as well, in fact the whole lot of them. He wanted his peace back. And now as he stepped out against the rain he reflected with pleasure that in a few hours it would in fact be all over. The Contest would be done and won. Not won by Miss Great-Belt, though—and a sense of justice rather than rancour filled him as he made this reservation. Yet after the Contest would they really leave ? Probably—they were mostly subsidised. And certainly—if the weather held. ' Blow, blow, thou winter wind——' he hummed more cheerfully to himself as he paced along.

He went to the club and refreshed himself. Everett Evans wished him a gloomy ' best of luck ' for the afternoon—but left before the eating. Morley then had a good luncheon in the company of his fellows.

The Contest had been scheduled to take place in the open-air salt-water pool—the Pier Aquadrome, a place of civic pride. Now it had to be removed inside, into the Aquadrome's Winter Garden. This was a large white concrete modern building set like a plate-

glassy liner, all decks and terraces, astern the paddle-boat old Pier.

By half-past two, in spite of the weather, quite a queue had assembled. Most of those that formed it, men and women alike, wore pixie-hoods. Tall-pointed heads leaned this way and that, chattering like a troop of fairies drenched with harebell dew—the women like wet narcissus petals in their grey-white plastics, the men in duffle-hoods like hairy great gnomes. All these were admitted slowly into a bare concrete hall brilliantly shadowed by mauve strip-lighting.

This ominous form of illumination has been called 'daylight' lighting. Yes—but it is the light of the worst day of the worst month of the year, the lilac light of a raw February afternoon. Faces everywhere lost their colour, lips turned purple-black and skins took on the pallor of long illness. Nevertheless, though soaked and drained of colour, the audience managed a certain cheerfulness: it was the cheerfulness particular to a wet sea-side afternoon, when spirits soaked by the rain dribbling down windows of boarding-houses and hotels eventually make a burst for freedom—to batter along against rain and sea-wind, and thence to commingle at some echoing hall of entertainment with a clattering of umbrellas, a thumping of boots, a wet rubber smell, a draughty gusto of raised voices.

So that now, sodden but heady with relief to be taken out of themselves on this stolen day of their holiday, the pixie audience gradually massed into seats set in amphitheatrical style round a semi-circular raised platform. On this the Beauties were to parade. And on its straight side there were ranged the judges' chairs, and their long table draped with Union Jacks.

A roar of laughter went up as Fred Morley and his four fellow-adjudicators entered. They were a great joke. Five portly gentlemen, wrested from their everyday dignities and their all-embracing wives, put to the task of examining pretty girls with hardly anything on! . . . Watch that professional eye glaze over. Watch blood pressures rise and pulses quicken! Five fat ruddy genial lambs up there on their altar . . . it was slaughter, it was murder, it was *killing*! 'Hooooo,' roared the crowd . . .

Dressed in their best suits the judges simpered and blushed, dug each other in their ribs and whispered wicked chuckles in each other's ears as they settled down. One made an over-courty gesture ushering his neighbour to his chair; another made

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for a brief two steps the motion so beloved of hefty hearties in their cups, he put one hand on a hip and lumbered along mincing like what he thought was a lady. Only old Fred, who was accustomed to an audience, retained his composure. He contented himself with a short, but most telling, twirl of his silken moustache-end.

Then the uniformed Silver Band at the other end of the hall struck up—what but *A Pretty Girl is like a Melody*?; a door opened at one side and up a long inclined gang-plank came the girls.

They came first jostling, then as they reached the raised parade spaced themselves out—a plump, slender, tall, short, round forty of them. In slow measure, with short proud steps, pausing almost at each step, hesitating just as heel touched passing heel, like primping prancing two-legged ponies they passed round the ring.

All wore the same small costume. That had been one of the rules. It had been adopted because it was time the proposer had one of his ideas accepted, so that he might remain quiet in other matters. The Contest Organisation bore the cost, which in terms of the area of material needed had been slight. White rayon had been chosen—a remnant from Everett Evans's Drapery Store. Now each girl wore at her loins a close-fitting triangle, and at her breasts two discreetly billowing moons. No more. And, for sure, no less.

Each carried in her hand a card with a number. Only their shoes were their own, and these were in every case the highest they had—from great clobbering wedges to elegancies of the white summer, from shoes tasselled and curiously strapped to patent black evening shoes that quarrelled painfully with the naked flesh pressed into them. One girl, hard put, had come in a pair of tennis plimsols: she went round balancing avidly on her toes, a Shetland among the Shires.

The five judges leaned forward or sat back, pretending thus either keen judicial interest or recessive judicial wisdom. At first they were simply bewildered by so much sudden beauty. They sat in a fog of arms, legs, eyes, teeth, hair and all else. From bubble-bath and mud-tub, from pummelling-board and rubber roller came those fleshlings shining and smiling. Some had enclosed their legs in whole sheets of hot wax, from which they came hairless as ivory; others had foregone the luxuriance of mascara and instead brushed their eye-lashes with black boot polish to get a stronger set, a more lustrous shine. All smiled largely—though some by lowering their eyes achieved a sort of

modesty at the same time, a redoubtable feat. All seemed not only to be following in each other's footsteps but their own as well—this was because their high heels forced their knees forward, so that they hung back on themselves, as if searching out the ground before the main upperwork should follow: bended knees, mad knees stealthing on tip-toe to unheard-of larders.

Miss Great-Belt hung just behind such knees when she first passed the judge's stand. Then she saw Frederick Morley—and nearly fell on them. For a second she lost her composure. Her face had been stretched into a design of radiant happy loveliness—eyes stretched wide yet with slightly lowered lids, lips stretched ovalling round their last liquid teeth. Now as she saw Morley there, Morley whom she had never expected, Morley whom she had told off only the night before, that expression did not leave her face—but in every feature it contracted, it grew smaller for a moment into an exactly reduced replica of itself. Heavens, her first thought was, what a stupid girl I am! Never to have known! (It never occurred to her how she could ever have known, she instantly blamed herself.) . . . But what a monster he is not to have told me! Then, as she transferred the blame to him, her self-esteem came flooding back, the eyes and lips opened again like the flesh of a startled anemone flowering for the attack, and never having really faltered and now with new aplomb she passed on. He would be feeling sorry, she thought, and wish to expiate his deception. Besides, deep down he's fallen for me. Besides, there are four other judges. Besides, whatever the odds I'm good enough to beat the lot of them.

As she passed him and for a moment their eyes met, Morley was able to look as though he was looking right through her.

And then round and round the girls paraded. Sometimes the band changed its tune, broke into a dreamy waltz, and then all the girls broke step, bewildered in their dancing blood by the change of tempo: they quickly regained themselves and went knee-ing on.

The vast hall echoed to laughter, catcalls, whistles and sighs from the crowd. 'Irene!' some called: 'Doreen!' others. 'Git up them stairs,' yelled the lustier members, and one man throughout the long parade repeated over and over again, at most regular intervals, and on a note of despair, 'Roll me over.'

But despite such convivialities—how misfortunate those girls were! It was cold there in that hall. They shivered, and many arms and legs so smoothly cared for now erupted into gooseflesh.

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In the changing room the six foreign girls had shivered with cold—and with anger. They had combined in whole-hearted vituperation of the English weather, and finally all things English. When they had exhausted everything else—food, clothes, weather and so on—Miss Clermont-Ferrand had summed the matter up with the irrelevant, but emphatic and somehow damning words: 'Double-decker Buses!'

Not only was it cold, but it looked cold. That hard mauve light stared down from the ceiling with the glare of arc-lamps on arterial concrete, rinsing all in varying shades of its mauve, killing all other colour. Lilac flesh, lavender crannies, purple lips; nightshade eyes—it became a circumambulation of the dead: corpsy smiles lured the way, rigor mortis was on the move, it was a dream parade of maidens killed before their time. And far away, like an old grey wardress, Life still drizzled a dustbin blessing from the windowed world outside.

The judges, first dazzled, then surfeited, had now become so used to the bodies before them that their minds, obeying the laws of curiosity and creation, began to work on them afresh. Their eyes searched those bodies as a prisoner may search his cell and find in such bareness a new world of hidden detail. Thus they began to notice that where the spine of one girl snuggled like a long and lovely dimple, the next protruded in a sweet and charming ladder of little knobs. Where one naked torso showed a broad squarish form moulded like Greek armour, the next was softly shapeless as the ribless tube of an odalisque.

Moles took on a new presence, they grew insistent as flies on a bare ceiling. Bruises—wide brown smudges and little purple nips—showed clearer and clearer, freckles came into their own, and in that light the yellowing of armpits took on a new and virulent lilac life. So too the flushed pork-crackling, the armadillo flesh at the backs of heels—this turned deep purple, so that sometimes it looked as if a girl wore the kind of stocking that has a dark reinforcement above the back of her shoe. And the light made Miss Sauerkraut's ears, which with her blonde pallor were normally bright red, black.

The veins of auburn girls stood out like nests of rivers on maps and the lines that others wore from navel to pudenda split like cheese-wire. But the navels themselves were a study on their own—dear little buttons, wicked forget-me-knots like cropped pink piglet tails, fingertip holes and penny-size pits and sometimes none

at all but simply a recessive folding of modest flesh : one alderman, who had a compulsion complex, who normally had to walk between the lines of pavement stones or make countings of objects in rooms, found himself muttering a kind of permutation gamble to himself as the navels passed : ' Button-Putton. Holey-Poley. Button—Put—no, damn, Holey-Poley. . . '

And there were the operation scars, the appendix marks. And the vaccination marks, brown cornflowers on arm and thigh. And where some had taken the sun, the criss-cross of bathing-costume straps white on brown ; and the cabalist label on the wrist where a watch-and-strap had been. And then all the other little marks, the little creases, and the wobbling and swinging of this and of that—all of these and so much more came to the fascinated eyes of the five startled gentlemen as that blanched and black-lipped procession passed before them.

(Yet how much more startled they would have been had their ears grown as alert as their eyes—for then they would have heard the ceaseless silent song whispered on the lips of every one of those priestesses as they marched, a song of one word only, the lip-stretched litany : ' Cheese.')

Even Fred Morley, accustomed to rub shoulders with so many ladies of the chorus, was surprised. In the theatre the light was kinder, and there was powder and paint. Here, he found himself thinking, they were like medical samples, girls in bottles, selected picklings.

Finally the moment for judgement arrived. The Judges whispered to each other, passed little scraps of paper. The band stopped playing. The great hall was hushed—a murmur of whispering and tittering only, the sound of a hive of waiting bees. The girls stood in a long line in front of the judges, their hands to their sides, defenceless, offered.

Three of Morley's co-judges elected immediately and unreservedly for Miss Great-Belt. It took him some time to disenchant them. But he did. To them he stood as something of an expert, a professional man : he played on this, ironically arguing their lack of taste, making them feel silly. But instantly he raised their esteem by congratulating them on their second and third choices—with raised eyebrows and a knowing wink : ' Ho, I see you *do* know a thing or two ! '

Finally a decision was taken.

Miss Amsterdam was awarded the first prize. A local lady, a

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blonde Miss Browne, came second, and long pale Miss Sauerkraut romped in third. Miss Great-Belt came nowhere at all.

The crowd cheered and booed, cheered for Miss Browne, and booed for Miss Great-Belt. But the Judges' decision was final. There was no going back. And now Fred Morley rose to present the prizes.

A fine crocodile dressing-case for Number One, a portable wireless for Number Two, and oddly a set of pressure cookers for Miss Sauerkraut. And cheques for all. And for everybody present a few words from Frederick Morley.

'Ladies,' he began, and gave a great sigh, rolling his eyes. Roars of laughter.

'And Gentlemen,' he continued, with a sniff, as though he disbelieved in the presence of these. Redoubled laughter.

But then he silenced the laughter with measured and grave opening words. He made one of those speeches that keep the audience well on their toes—as soon as he got them uncomfortable and guilty with a passage of great gravity, he let fall a howling joke (and he was careful to make it a howler, not to serve wit in that most mixed hall). And as soon as they were howling, down he came on them hard with a passage of such stony grandeur that the air echoed a susurrus of shoe shufflings and coughs as presenceful as the laughter itself.

He had prepared this. And the reason he had taken so much trouble was to introduce a more personal condiment addressed to Miss Great-Belt. It was an address of omission. He made particular reference to the other international visitors—but not to her : and to make this the more striking he made it the less pointed by omitting one of the others, Miss Rotterdam, as well. He expressed on behalf of all present his gratitude to these ladies of lands across the sea for the honour of their visit—and then brought out some personal whoppers : of the lady from Rome's seaside, 'all roads lead to Miss Civitavecchia'; of Miss Sauerkraut, 'my little cabbage—and not so sour at that'; of the first prize-winner, 'not only a fair damsel but a veritable *Amsterdamsel*,' and so on, whoppers that issuing from his presidential mouth achieved an arch and fearful force.

And that, all but the shouting, was that. There was nothing left but to go off into the drizzle.

Except—for a brief moment, but a moment which was to have great repercussion—for Miss Great-Belt.

Miss Great-Belt had her place, like all the others, in the line of girls listening to Morley's speech. But with a difference—she was the only one who somehow appeared thoroughly and properly dressed. It was as usual—her self-containedness at its magic work again. There she stood in her little triangle and her two small moons, nothing else, with her hands to her sides. She should have stood as sacrificially slavishly offered as all the others. Instead she remained composed and remote. She stood on her own legs, in her own right, occupied only by herself.

But when the speech ended, and the line of girls broke up, she simply stood on.

For only a few seconds—yet seconds at such a time that stretched in the eyes of the onlookers into statuesque minutes—she stood alone exactly as she had stood for the previous quarter-hour, her eyes fixed vaguely on the platform of judges.

Then her eyes woke up, startled. She looked around her. For a moment she hesitated. She seemed even to totter, not knowing which way she had to go. Then she saw, regained herself, turned and walked with all composure down the gangplank.

Miss Great-Belt had been thinking.

That moment of action, or of inaction, had not gone unperceived by Fred Morley. He had noticed it from the corner of his eye, not then wishing to turn his full face upon her, and had triumphantly noted it as an expression of her discomfort at losing the prize. But intuition is not a monopoly of the feminine, and far back and vaguely through his jubilation a bell of unease had tolled. An intuitive woman, in his place, would have sought for an immediate solution, right or wrong, to such a problematic sound; but Fred Morley had preferred to shut his ears to it, it was uncomfortable, he had done a good day's work and wished to relax upon his laurels.

Relaxation took the form of a visit to the Yacht Club. There, again in manly company, again among the chaffing and congratulations of his fellows, there was every hope of a pleasant end to a perfect day. But the opposite occurred. As the conviviality compounded, so did the tolling of that small bell of unease. It rang louder and louder. He tried to be, but he could not remain, deaf to it. And as the sound grew louder it took shape—from a vague unease it invented form. What—he began to consider—

would be her real reaction to the afternoon's happening? How on earth could—he thought between drinks and digs in the ribs—a strong woman like that take such treatment lying down?

In the end he grew certain she would have her revenge. He remembered that women are said to like the last word: he considered this afresh, and began to believe it. He remembered the adage about he who laughs last laughing longest: he believed that too. And when he mixed the two ideas, substituting a 'she' for a 'he,' the significance grew appalling.

But what form could such revenge take? Whichever way he looked at it, his apprehension grew. He knew that the ways of women were profound and unpredictable, their veiled wiles a labyrinth, their capacity for innuendo prodigious. Yet on the other hand there was the fact that when women fought, when the battle-cry was really raised, then they fought with the gloves off. His mind grew confused with visions of the Wives of Kings and Fishwives with Arms Akimbo. But since his own capacities for innuendo were small, his mind attached itself to, and enlarged upon, the latter conception.

She would slap his face in public! She would tear the house down—shatter the windows, slash the furniture, flood the baths, fire the curtains! (If that were only all . . .!) But what among these oversize visions he really feared was that she would invent a story against him, perhaps make some appalling charge. Assault. Rape. Or what was that word even worse? . . . Interference! She would say he had Interfered with Her. No proof, no witnesses? No such luck—he knew that two women can get together, and that there would be one or two others dissatisfied with the result of the Contest.

He became overwrought. He dared not go home: but nor could he bear the anticipation.

Finally, less from courage than from a simpler impulse to 'go and see what it's all about,' he excused himself from Evans and the others ('Ho, The Homing Pigeon!' 'Bye Bye Bluebeard! Love to the Misses!') and made his way home. Less certainly from courage, for he made his way in by the back door.

Excusing himself round the maid in the kitchen, who looked at him with surprise and suspicion mixed (another black mark? 'Miss Abercrombie, a temporary domestic in the employ of the accused, was called to the witness stand'), he tiptoed into the hall and listened.

No one downstairs.

Upstairs, sounds that might have meant packing.

What voices he now heard spoke in their own languages. No more need of a common language? Getting into groups? Not too good.

Then suddenly down the stairs the sounds of running rustling skirts, heels! In panic he looked each way—impossible to return to the kitchen, no time to cross to the lounge! He was cornered! However, thank Heavens, it was only one of them—Miss Amsterdam, first prize-winner, a friend!

She gave a cry of delight, flung her arms round him and kissed him.

'Oh you dear good kind man,' she cried, hugging him, 'thank you, thank you, *thank* you!'

If anyone comes in now, Morley thought, then Evidence, Witnesses, Deeper than Ever . . . gently and quickly he disengaged himself, more formally congratulating her.

'But I am so glad you're here,' she went on to say, 'we've been looking all over for you! Now I must tell you . . .' And she went into details of how some girls would leave on the morrow, by what trains, and the rest on the following day. She made no mention of Miss Great-Belt's intention. But as an afterthought, turning her head back from the front-door: 'Oh by the way, that Danish girl wants to see you—urgently, she said.'

He was left alone with this. He went on standing in the hall, too centrally for simply standing. The maid came in to ring the gong. He threw out a hand, giving the barometer a great thud, nearly knocking it from the wall. Simultaneously as he went on pounding that thing, the old brass gong rang out. The house echoed with huge sudden noise. And for once, all at once, all the girls seemed to pile out of their rooms together. They came tripping down the stairs at him.

He was cornered with greetings. He could not opt but to go into dinner with them.

Miss Great-Belt nearly forced Miss Sauerkraut out of her chair in order to sit next to him. And of all others her smile was the most welcoming, throughout dinner she was charming.

Naturally, he made himself most gracious to her in return. But he distrusted her, he distrusted every flutter of her lovely eyelids. It must all be a cover for something terrible to come.

And after dinner, after all valedictory speeches had been made,

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Miss Great-Belt went so far as to suggest that he took her out for some coffee, perhaps even to dance. 'But I know dancing must be a sore question between us,' she went on to say, 'I know it was uncivil of me to go dancing that night you invited me to the theatre. But I *do* apologise. Let's say bygones are bygones? Shall we?'

At that moment Fred Morley could easily have excused himself. His better judgement advised him to. But two other voices spoke inside him. One said that a dance-floor in a hotel was public and therefore safe; the second whispered that perhaps she really was, after all, making her peace with him. The latter voice though in a whisper, spoke the louder. In fact, engaged again by her charms and never at a loss for respect of his own, he had already begun to believe that she was finally expressing a real attraction towards him.

They took coffee together at Morley's favourite hotel—the very terrace, glass-shaded, where once he had foreseen himself with the Misses Rotterdam and Clermont-Ferrand—and later went in to dance. He took care to act with the greatest propriety and even introduced her to his friend the head-waiter as a professional lady from Denmark who, with her colleagues, had been billeted by the Town Hall on his house. This would put to rest any wilder speculations as to the nature of his strange and beautiful guest. The bush-telegraph would tap round the room a rational and respectable tune.

As for Miss Great-Belt, she continued to be soft, sweet, charming. All her past animosity had vanished. She seemed to throw open that invisible veil that had hitherto made her so unattainable, so much the woman of 'process,' and now welcomed him without question into the privacy of her composure. A woman so self-contained is ordinarily an uneasy companion. But when such a woman decides to invite one into her private sympathies, to give exactly her laughter and her confidence in the measure one knows it is withheld from others—then she becomes overwhelming. Without indulgence, with no condescension, but purely and simply, Miss Great-Belt welcomed Morley to herself. He was bowled over.

Quite early in the evening she made one point clear. 'Now I do want to say once and for all,' she said, opening her great eyes wide for frankness, leaning towards him like a large dark red cat, 'that I congratulate you on your decision this afternoon. In my view you were absolutely right. That sweet Dutch girl

was obviously the winner. I can see that one of the prizes had to go to an English girl—politics are politics. And there was every reason for poor Nuremburg—she looks so pale, doesn't she? A sick woman, yes she needs encouragement, it was very kind—taking third prize. Who wants to be third anyhow? No, I know you'll suspect I'm jealous—but honestly I'm not. With me justice counts before—whatever is the word?—*self*?

She said this with great content, purring over her sacrifice, her frank good nature. He did not notice this. His instinct rose to protect a lady in distress. He began instantly to lie that he himself had voted for her for first prize—but what could he do against so many others?

He was surprised to notice that this was not received well. She looked, he thought, even a trifle offended. Why? Ah! . . . And he went straight on to point out that it was exactly because of this out-voting that, momentarily piqued, he simply could not bear to mention so much as her name in his presidential address.

As he stumbled through these paces, Miss Great-Belt watched him keenly. She saw that he was lying, and was satisfied. They finished the evening in high spirit with each other.

When the other ladies left during the next days, Miss Great-Belt stayed on. For propriety's sake she removed to the nearby hotel, but she stayed on in the town. She and Morley saw each other every day. They went to the theatre, they dined together, they took motor-trips into the country and they went sailing on the sea.

The weather continued fine, it was a memorable month. Miss Great-Belt wrote to her father and begged permission to remain a few weeks more. Morley was in heaven. Now he avoided the Yacht Club altogether: he spent all his time with his new and lovely companion in places where they might be admired by more discriminating eyes.

It was for him a flirtation *de luxe*. It complimented his years, it redounded satisfactorily to his prowess. Finally, he told himself, he had won the day. Trust an old bachelor! Sometimes, when he thought of it all, he remembered with a reproving chuckle the first days, the very first days when he had unfolded every charm to entice her, when he had sacrificed every self-respect. How had he not realised that it was the exact opposite which would win her? Why—in a dozen musical shows this very process nightly comprised the whole plot! He had played it out himself night after night,

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year after year—it was the very stuff of life? Why had he never realised . . . ? But then why, damn our eyes, do we all spend our lives delighting in the wisdom of paradox—yet hesitate to apply the risks to ourselves?

He laughed and wagged his doggy head. Silly old fool! But then—hadn't that same silly old fool come through with flying colours? In the end? It took perseverance. He smiled, a little in love with her and himself and with everything else. 'He who laughs last,' he chuckled.

But then she married him.

Half of Their Lives

Some Notes on the Victorian Mountaineers

BY RONALD W. CLARK

I go, Fate drives me, but I leave
Half of my life with you.

ARNOLD.

THERE is something a little surprising and almost slightly indecent about the fact that the Victorians, the bearded gentlemen from the family albums, provided the first considerable body of mountaineers the world had ever known.

They were, at first glance, essentially indoor gentlemen. Their portraits were taken against the back-cloth rather than the landscape ; their clothes were such as to make movement difficult and violent action, one might easily imagine, dangerous if not impossible ; their ambitions led to the Albert Hall and the terraced rows of the great towns rather than to the Garden Cities. Yet it is too often forgotten that the back-cloth was a near-necessity of the pre-Leica days, that the Charge of the Light Brigade was led by an officer in corsets, and that the closing decades of the last century were the great years not only of the debating society but also of the Natural History club. The 'indoorness' of the period is, in fact, merely a part of the Victorian façade, a popular and jolly erection vigorously strengthened during the last half-century ; through its chinks one has seen, too often, only caricatures of the men who wrestled with problems far more difficult than those of today yet who still succeeded in regarding the world 'steadily and whole.'

The Victorians were not, of course, at all like their caricatures. It is true that they were solid, usually sober, and tremendous workers ; yet they had other qualities, qualities which are illuminated most brilliantly of all by the records of the mountaineers among them, that eccentric, colourful galaxy of opposites who formed the Alpine community. These men, almost without exception, were more than mental giants ; they were original, enterprising, adventurous and tough.

Just consider what sort of men—and women—they were. Consider Edward Shirley Kennedy, left a fortune by his father at the age of 16—he invariably climbed with his man-servant following dutifully as far as he dared—who for a while lived with thieves and garrotters, and who tramped with similar companions from London to Brighton. Consider Meta Brevoort, the stern new woman of the age, beating the donkey-drivers if they ill-treated their animals, ample of figure and of dignity yet singing the Marseillaise on the top of Mont Blanc in the days of the Second Empire, and then dancing a quadrille with her guides. Consider William Grahame, that ill-starred adventurer who disappeared from the Victorian world without reason and who was last heard of as a cowboy in the Far West; Miss Stratton, the girl who married her guide; or benign C. E. Mathews, organising a six-course meal followed by coffee and liqueurs in the most desolate and ill-equipped Alpine hut. All these characters—a fair word for them—represented strong forces which were at work in the age, an age which had created, in the Alpine world, a microcosm of itself.

For it is almost true to claim that if there had been no Victorian Age there would today be no Alpine Club, none of the eighty mountaineering clubs which are scattered through Britain, few of the thousands of volumes which cluster on the mountain shelves of the booksellers. 'All the thought of the age arose out of the circumstances of the age,' G. M. Trevelyan has written of the Victorian period. So did mountaineering, the sport which during the eleven years of the 'Golden Age' from 1854 to 1865 took the Victorians up most of the hitherto virgin summits of the Alps and enabled them to gain, in a few brief years of triumph, the laurels which Continental travellers had been eyeing for a quarter of a century. The thoroughness of the record, which in Alpine statistics has the quality of an exhibition catalogue, is typical; nothing less, of course, would have satisfied the exacting standards of the people concerned.

How did it happen? What were the 'circumstances of the age' which made the rise of mountaineering so nearly inevitable?

Many minor reasons can be given in an effort to explain how it was that a few hundred lawyers, doctors, scientists, clergymen and merchants were willing to leave their well-servanted homes for the ragged bivouacs under the colder if more inspiring panoply of the Alpine stars. The most usual explanation is that the Victorian mountaineers were over-fed with wealth, ease, and luxury; they

had, for one reason or another, to get away from it all. They were, in a manner of speaking, the real Ivory Tower gentlemen for at least a few weeks every year. Alternatively, they were in some way best known to themselves salving their consciences in the Alps, finding something in the mountain world that might redress the balance of the factory world in which, even if they worked twelve hours a day, they worked under circumstances vastly different from those of their less fortunate employees.

This physical, Marxian, explanation is correct so far as it goes. The material advances of the Victorian years, it is true, not only gave men the craving for hard physical exercise under the sky but also enabled them to reach the Alps with an ease never before known. Yet when one considers the physical factors which gave birth to this new sport, the most astonishing thing is that the Victorians were tough enough to do what they did.

James David Forbes, the scholarly retiring invalid who was in many ways an eighteenth-century gentleman born into the nineteenth—and who, incidentally, was the first British traveller to make systematic journeys above the snow-line—wrote a very revealing paragraph rather late in life when the burden of disease was already hanging heavily on him. ‘He who does not feel his step lighter and his breath freer on the Montanvert and the Wengern Alp, may be classed among the incapables and permitted to retire in peace to paddle in a skiff on the Lake of Geneva or to loiter in the salons of Baden Baden,’ he said.

Forbes reminds one of a letter written many years later by Edward Whymper, that giant whose tragedy loomed like a black shadow behind the Alpine scene for nearly half a century. Whymper was 71 at the time, short of both breath and money, an old lion of whom the younger generation was still both respectful and cautious. He was explaining to W. A. B. Coolidge, the pedantic scholar-mountaineer who was intermittently his friend, enemy and—very possibly—father-confessor, how he would again visit one of his old Alpine haunts. ‘When I come, I shall come in the old style,’ he wrote. ‘Shall walk up, not order rooms in advance, and take my chance as to finding a room. If none can be had, I shall camp out.’

Whymper was, in this respect, no exception. Leslie Stephen was not only the editor of the Dictionary of National Biography but one of the forty-mile-a-day men. John Ball, the editor of the Alpine Guide, strode down the scorching Italian valleys bearing his own

pack, although he was in his own way a *cavalier* as well as an Englishman, and most certainly a gentleman who might have been expected to employ porters. Forbes, the invalid, lost his knapsack and crossed the Stelvio on foot with what he could stuff into his pockets. Michael Faraday, mountaineer as well as scientist, walked from Leukerbad over the Gemmi Pass to Thun, 44 miles in 10½ hours and two hours rest, in spite of illness. All are typical of the Victorians whose toughness would probably reveal itself surprisingly well on a Commando course, even though they would go through the business in stove-pipe trousers, keep their hands clean, and ask a few pertinent questions at the end of it.

For they were always asking questions. And it is here, rather than in any physical circumstance of the age, that there lies the clue to the mountain-urge. It might be the material circumstances which enabled men to reach the mountains with a facility never before known; it was something else which kept bringing them back, year after year, until mountains and mountaineering formed half of their lives.

The Victorians climbed, fundamentally, because they wanted their questions answered. They were questions of two sorts and they were asked by different, and at times diametrically opposed, groups of people. It is, in fact, no coincidence that scientists and clergymen were so numerous among the early mountaineers.

It was natural that the scientists, the men who wanted physical questions answered in some detail, should be first in the mountain field. After 1815, travel throughout Europe became less difficult and, at the same time, science began to push its boundaries far beyond those of the earlier century. The new enquirers began to ask why it was that one began to pant and gasp at a great height. Could birds or insects live above the places where snow lasted throughout the year? How and why did the glaciers, those white dragons of the medieval prints, move just as they did?

Such questions had of course been asked before, notably by Saussure, the Genevese whose offer of a reward to be given to the first man to reach the top of Mont Blanc directly led to its ascent in 1786. There had been scientific mountaineers before the Victorians, including a number of English men and women. Mrs. and Miss Campbell, two of the earliest British women climbers, had crossed the Col du Geant in the early 1820's. William Brockedon, who helped John Murray to produce the first edition of his famous handbook to Switzerland, had crossed the Theodule

below the Matterhorn in 1825, and a number of other glacier passes in 1828 and 1829. Mr. Francis Walker, who in 1865 took part in the famous first ascent of the Brenva Ridge at the age of 57, crossed the Theodule in 1826, while two years later Frederick Slade and Yeats Brown made an enterprising attempt to climb the Jungfrau from the Roththal. Yet all these exploits were isolated examples of *joie de vivre*. They aided only slightly in building up any permanent knowledge of travel above the snowline; they had little or no effect beyond a small and select circle of acquaintances; and they provided relatively little opportunity for what the contemporary writer calls the 'mountain magic' to get to work.

It was only when men began to climb in the mountains not spasmodically but regularly that the situation was altered. These men were the scientists. For to secure the answers to the questions they posed it was necessary for them to be out and about not only in fair weather but in the full blast of the mountain storm; it was necessary for them to camp, to train and hire guides who could carry their delicate instruments, to build up a technique of travel above the snowline and to produce a demand for better inns below it. The men of science acquired, in order to keep both their scientific wits about them and their lives intact, the first rules of mountain travel.

It is interesting therefore to remember that those who today seek out the last technical secrets of the Himalaya, the Hindu Kush or the Karakoram and who, almost incidentally, as it were, resolve in a new way the problems of Asiatic travel, had their counterparts in the pioneers such as Forbes, Tyndall, Bonney and Ramsay, who pressed ever more deeply into the mountains during the '40's and the '50's of the last century.

There are two pertinent points to note in connection with these Victorians who went mountaineering to solve their scientific problems, points which have a bearing on the apparently materialist or Marxist theory of mountaineering-impulse. The first is that a large number of these climbing scientists came to study and stayed to worship. Forbes, whose ponderous glacier argument rumbled round the universities for decades, finished by becoming as great a mountain-addict as Ruskin (and, it might be said, not such a very different kind of addict). Tyndall, who when it came to writing could rarely disentangle his mountain-worship from the trails of Royal Society prose, built his 'London' house at Hindhead where the mists can summon up the mountain glory as easily as

HALF OF THEIR LIVES

anywhere in the world, and later made his spiritual home in the little—and almost unbelievably ugly—house at Alp Lusgen. Bonney, the great geologist, thrust into the Dauphiné many years before Whymper did so, and was captured not only by the record of the rocks but also by the mountain scene. Ramsay became attached to the mountains of Snowdonia with an affection that was by no means scientific.

The second interesting point is that so many of these mountaineering scientists, who found in the mountains something that was apparently more than the answer to their scientific conundrums, were in fact geologists. They were, in other words, men whose daily life and thought brought them into full and unavoidable contact with the awful problems posed by the revelations of this science which had eaten so deeply into man's accepted beliefs. The geologists had done more than any other group of men to undermine man's ancient belief in the certainty of the Universe and in a life everlasting ; it would be easy to maintain that in that fact lay the real seed of mountain-worship—when immortality goes, hold fast to the magnificent certainties of mountain-form and mountain-beauty.

Yet the geologists were no more prominent than the clergy, the gentlemen who were doing their best to maintain a belief in the cosmology which the awkward scientists were destroying with an unnerving ease. This apparent paradox of the wolf and the lamb setting out, so to speak, on the same Alpine expedition, is most illuminating. It shows what might have been expected from the circumstances, that they climbed for very similar reasons.

It is really a simple matter. With a few noble exceptions the clergymen had come too near to God. They understood the codified business of religion down to the last 'Amen' ; they were supremely confident of their position on God's right hand, able to give the answers so easily that in many cases religion had become more a matter of good cross-indexing than a basic belief. Knowledge had come in at the door and humility had flown out of the window. That was the outward form of affairs, a form in which Sunday prayers at the Bel Alp (sometimes followed by a spelling bee over which the Dean of Canterbury presided) gave a good and very well-earned advantage in the life to come over such men as the guides who occasionally lapsed into believing that there were, after all, really 'ghosts on the Matterhorn.'

The form lacked nothing except the essential mystery. Many

Victorian churchmen realised the fact. And, after the physical circumstances of the age had persuaded them into the mountains, they found on them some hint of this mystic and needed link between themselves and the unexplained and inexplicable. What is more they found that it gave to their mortal work a new and hard proselytising punch.

The geologists were in much the same way. They, too, had begun to explain everything far too satisfactorily. They, too, though in a different way, needed to get out beyond the slick certainties of life to the point where doubt arose. In their case it was not so much a religious question of belief as an intellectual problem posed by expanding knowledge which was the difficulty; yet with them, also, the climbing of difficult mountains restored the balance. The academic as well as the physical and spiritual problems they found gave them back their necessary unknown and made them complete men once again.

Few of these climbers, either scientists or Churchmen, declared openly and boldly to the world the full pungent reasons for their mountaineering. What they did do was to agree that they had ears attuned to the lesser mysteries. Almost without exception, they sought 'contact with Nature.'

The mountaineers carried this business of experiencing the rough yet kindly touch of Nature one logical step further than most of their contemporaries. This was very right, for they felt the artificiality of the picnic at the end of the carriage-drive; they knew not only the limitless suggestions but also the limitations of Box Hill and Hindhead and the other physically lesser mountains of the world. They realised that to regain what their age had lost they had to give genuine hostages to fortune; they had, at some time in the process, really to stand alone and battered by the gale with only a fair chance of getting home alive. Nothing less would do.

The Victorian climbers were therefore united in seeing in their mountain adventures something different from a sport, something impinging on their thoughts more significantly than any hobby could ever do, something which was to mould their lives and fashion out of them such beings that those men who climbed mountains were not—either to themselves or to the greater world—as other men.

This deep spiritual satisfaction which they found in the mountains was, it must be admitted, the only thing that did unite them.

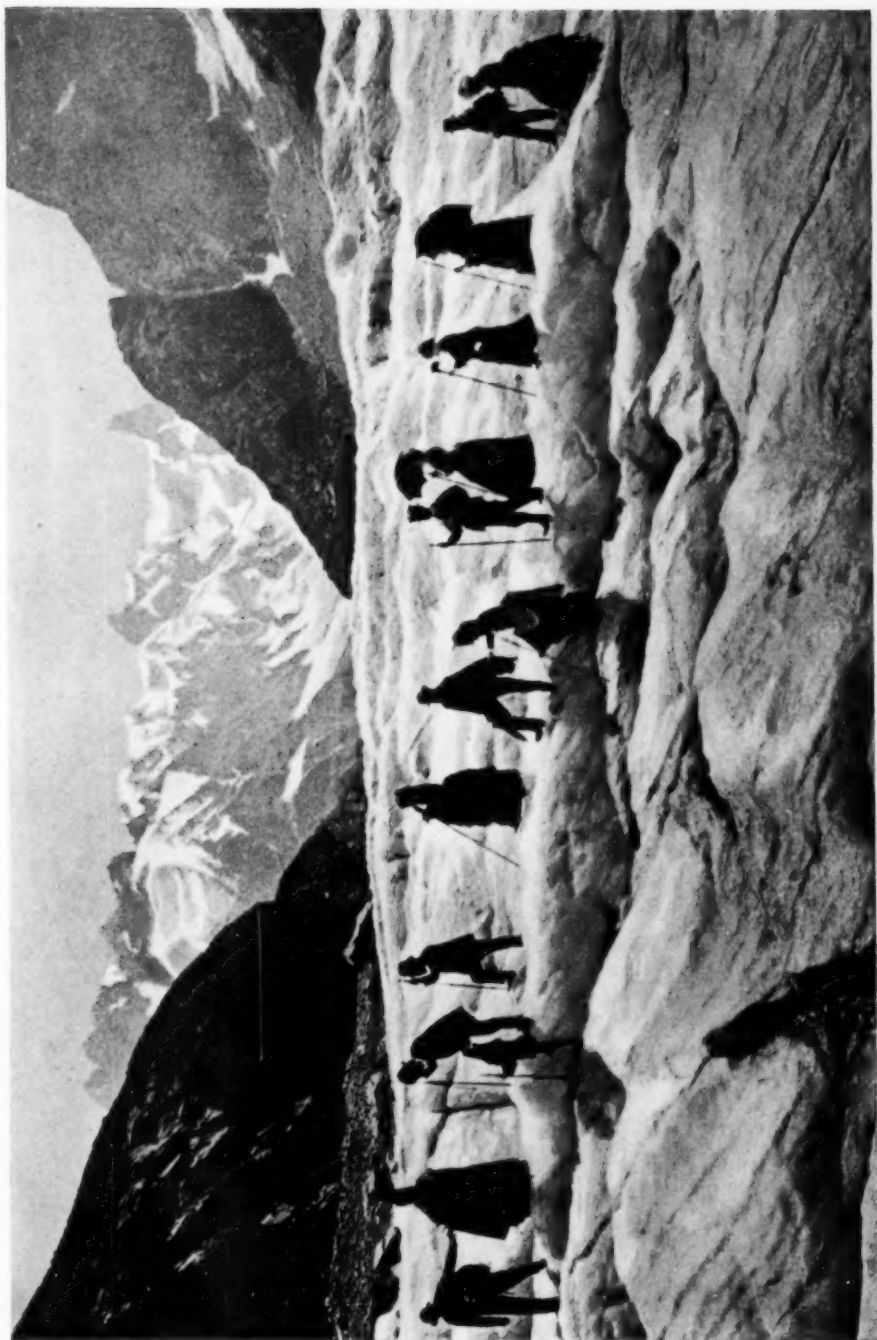
Few groups of men joined by a common enthusiasm or belief

have had such varied backgrounds, made such different approaches to the *minutiae* of their sport, drawn such different pleasures from a similar set of circumstances, or fought such bitter and unrelenting disputes in urging their own points of view. Outside the bright circle of light cast by the great Alpine disputes they might be tolerant and liberal-minded and forgiving; inside it they were uncommonly like the great teachers, each maintaining that his, alone, was the one route not only up to the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven but also through it.

It was not surprising, of course, that they should have argued. They were too many-sided to agree for long on anything; their interests overflowed into the other fellows' compartments, and they all had particular views of their own—on everything. Many, such as Ball and Francis Fox Tuckett, combined an amateur interest in science with their love of exploring fresh country; some of the artists, Whymper above all, were among the most enterprising of the explorers; some of the scientists, notably Tyndall, became not only mountain-worshippers, but pioneers in the craft far ahead of their contemporaries. Because of this intermingling of ideas and interlocking of resulting events, it becomes a major problem to judge fairly which group of men exerted the greatest influence on the sport and thereby drew to it the greatest number of adherents. Does the great glacier controversy equal in influence Albert Smith's *Mont Blanc Sideshow* which earned him £30,000? Do either equal the influence of Ruskin's fourth volume of *Modern Painters*? Men began climbing for a multiplicity of minor reasons, once the 'circumstances of the age' allowed, even though most of them continued climbing for one alone.

There are two points which should be considered in connection with this development of mountaineering roughly a century ago, a development worked up into a great movement by the yeast of a strong spiritual need. The first is that it was not, as is generally imagined, the prerogative of the wealthy. The second is that it was carried out in conditions which had not radically changed since the Middle Ages.

Some Victorian mountaineers were, it is true, born with a canteen of silver spoons in their mouths. Yet one must not forget Thomas Atkinson who was admitted to the select Alpine Club even though he had been born 'of humble origin, became a bricklayer's labourer and quarryman and later a stonemason and carver.' It is too often forgotten that Tyndall, the poor Irishman from County



BRITISH TRAVELLERS CROSSING THE MER DE GLACE ABOVE CHAMONIX IN THE
EARLY 1880's



By courtesy of the Alpine Club
OUTSIDE THE HOTEL MONTROSA, ZERMATT, IN THE LATE 1860's

Carlow, first saw the Alps on a student's walking tour which he 'got through amazingly cheap'; that Whymper was poor as well as young when he went to the Alps as an engraver for Longmans; and that many of the less well-endowed Churchmen who played such a part in Victorian mountaineering only did so through the use of the cheaper *pension* and the packed *diligence*. They were not all rich men, and guideless climbing itself might never have evolved had it not been for the need to save the exorbitant fees sometimes asked by the guides for difficult expeditions. Even the Coolidges, superficially among the richest of travellers, touring with their *caravanseraï* of Christian Almer, 'young Christian,' one or more porters and the immortal dog Tschingel, at times had to cut their travel according to their finances.

One of the most moving letters sent to the young Coolidge from his aunt, Miss Brevoort, came from the Bel Alp where she had remained, so that on the money saved he might again try his hand in the Dauphiné, the Dauphiné where there rose the Meije, the unclimbed mountain which dominated Miss Brevoort's life as the Matterhorn dominated Whymper's. She regrets that she has been compelled to remain in the Oberland, and writes: 'Alas, and to think of all the others who will be coming, and of the *one* who may succeed. Dear Will, give my love to all my dear old friends now in your sight and especially to that glorious Meije, and ask her to keep herself for me.'

It was not, in fact, all carriages and champagne. What is more, it was an Alpine world which, in spite of the relays of porters and guides which were sometimes available, was vastly more inconvenient, uncomfortable, and untamed than it is today.

Adams-Reilly, the amiable Irish gentleman whose lovely map of Mont Blanc carried on the work of Forbes, once wrote of the Alpine world into which Forbes had penetrated in the 1840's, a world not so very different from that which saw the end of the Golden Age. 'Legends of air too rarefied to support life, and of avalanches started by the human voice, still lingered among the crags—the "trailing skirts" of that departing night of superstition which had before peopled them with dragons and chimeras,' he wrote.

The first railways came to this shadowy land only in 1844 when the first tracks were laid in Switzerland; as yet there were only a few miles of them, and in 1857, the year when the Alpine Club was founded, no railways entered the mountain zone. Deposited at the

railway terminus of the lowland belt, the traveller bound for the Alps had for the next stage of the journey the choice of the carriage, too dear except for the very wealthy, or the packed *diligence*. Even these petered out in the mountain zone, with the exception of the few which followed carriage routes across the great passes into Italy, leaving the mountain aspirant with the choice of travelling on foot or bargaining with the muleteers.

In his inns, the Victorian climber fared little better. Bonney the geologist, writing of the 1860's, says cryptically : ' Fresh meat could not be obtained, the bread and wine alike were sour ; vermin abounded.' Fleas provided, of course, an almost inexhaustible supply both of annoyance and of Alpine humour, and one feels at times that old Semiond, in his remark to Whympfer, had almost the right attitude—' I am no different from anyone else,' he said of the subject. ' I have them.'

It was in the Dauphiné that conditions, both of travel and of accommodation, were worst. Here, even at the end of the Golden Age, lay a great area of high virgin country, a land off the main track of Franco-Italian travellings, a land traversed by few roads and those ill-kept for wheeled traffic ; a country where even the huts of goitrous peasants were frequently better habitation than the inns ; a strange dominion in which even the heights of many great peaks were still unknown, still cloaked in an obscurity not so very different from that of the Middle Ages themselves. Even as late as 1870, when Coolidge and his aunt came down from the Aiguilles d'Arves into the Romanche Valley, that frontier-land of the Dauphiné, they found La Grave, although ' a lovely place, ablaze with flowers of every hue,' almost completely lacking in amenities of any kind. ' The floor of our room was as black as the ace of spades,' Miss Brevoort later wrote to her sister, ' a bag of flour and a sieve in one corner. No means of washing apparent, flowers spread out to dry on the floor, no pillows, sheets like dish cloths ! Will went to bed while his clothes were drying and, concluding it was the best place for him, remained there ! We made some tea and had boiled eggs, but neither milk nor butter as the cows are away. Fleas without end !'

Throughout most of the Alpine regions the pioneers were served by maps that were at the worst unreliable and at the best so laughably inadequate that they could not seriously be used. The first explorers of the Dauphiné, who came little more than a decade before Coolidge and his aunt, were forced to use Bourcett's map of

1749-54—a map drawn only a few years after the days of Scheuchzer, who seriously listed the various species of dragons to be found in the mountains.

During these days of mountaineering genesis, the period during which the comfortable homes of England were left in the search for a new mystic Grail, collecting boxes for cretins, the grotesquely goitrous, still hung in the larger Alpine inns. Men not only spoke, but spoke in careful words, of the giants who dwelt among the thunder of the great peaks. Some spirit of the eighteenth century still hung like the gauzy mists of dawn above a world where the safe return of a traveller from the heights was the signal for a Guide-Chef to prepare specially-written testimonials, for the inn-keeper to summon staff to prepare a victory banquet, and for the servant to touch off the cannons which still roared out to tell the valley of such a triumphal event.

It was into this remote world of the day before yesterday that the Victorians strode, marching out along the Alpine paths with a gait that combined the determined tread of the conqueror with the more diffident and humble step of the pilgrim.

Mass Mind: A Modern Catchword

BY JOYCE CARY

EVERY age, they say, has its special bit of nonsense. The eighteenth century had its noble savage, and the nineteenth its automatic progress. Now we have this modern nonsense about the 'mass man.' We are all told constantly that people are becoming more and more standardised. That mass education, mass amusements, mass production, ready-made clothes, and a popular press are destroying all individuality—turning civilisation into a nice, warmed, sterilised orphan asylum where all the little lost souls wear the same uniforms, eat the same meals, think the same thoughts, and play the same games.

This belief is now so completely accepted that it underlies half the writing and thinking of the time, like chalk under the downs. You don't see it but it gives shape to what you do see. If you deny it you will get the same order of response that met Galileo when he first said that the earth moved through the sky, 'We can use our eyes.' You will be told, 'Look at the crowds in the streets or at any football match. Go to the films, read the newspapers. Consider the disappearance of national dress all over the world—the immense development of laws restricting individual liberty, standardising our lives. Go on a tour to famous sights—year by year there will be bigger crowds of morons gaping at them and listening to the spiel of some bored guide—a piece nicely designed to satisfy the mass mind.'

And you will be referred to history and old travel accounts to learn how various and delightful the world was, in dress and thought and individuality, one hundred or even fifty years ago.

I was convinced of all this myself till I went to administer the affairs of a primitive tribe in Africa. There I found that the tribal mind was much more truly a mass mind than anything I had known in Europe. The nearest approximation to it was among illiterate peasantry in remote country districts. Tribesmen and primitive peasants are intensely narrow and conservative. Their very simple ideas and reactions guide them in a mysterious and dangerous world.

JOYCE CARY

I found that young chiefs with enterprise and ambition were keen to learn about the world outside the tribe. If they got away from it, they tended to put on European dress. To them, European dress was not a mark of the mass mind, but of the free and independent mind.

Likewise, when a European peasantry becomes educated and enterprising, it breaks away from the national dress which seems a badge of servitude and backwardness. To tourists, no doubt, this is a misfortune. As a keen tourist and sight-seer, I wish all Scotsmen would wear the kilt and all Turks the tarboosh. I'm delighted that some are beginning to do so again. But these are individualists, eccentrics, nationalists—national dress is not a tribal uniform to them, but a proclamation of difference, an assertion of self.

Education, contact with other peoples, breaks up tribal uniformity of thought and custom, brings in new ideas. That is, it makes for difference. The celebrated eccentrics of former centuries were either lunatics—or educated men.

New ideas also make for conflict. Old African chiefs hated roads and railways: they said they brought in strangers who corrupted the young people with new ideas and made them rebellious. They were quite right. It is far easier to rule a primitive tribe than a modern democracy where every individual is ready to criticise the government, where everyone has his own ideas about politics and religion, and where dozens of societies, unions, religious sects claim independence and support ambitious leaders who are ready to fight at any time for their 'rights.'

The more education a man has the more likely he is to be independent in his views and obstinate in sticking to them. A committee of professors, I can assure you, is much harder to manage than a council of African chiefs.

And this throws light on another argument brought forward to prove that individuality is vanishing from the world—the enormous increase of law and regulation, the growing power of the police. In my primitive African tribe, law enforcement was in the hands of village chiefs. There was very little theft. I could leave my bungalow wide open and unguarded for three weeks at a time and nothing was ever taken. We had crimes of passion and crimes of witchcraft, but no criminal class, no crooks as you know them in the big city, no cranks, no anarchists—so we did not require an elaborate structure of law.

You do not need traffic police where there is no wheeled traffic.

You do not need postal bylaws where no one knows how to write. But the modern state, simply because of the independence of its citizens, the complication of their demands, needs a huge machine of law and police. This is not a proof of the mass mind but the exact opposite—of a growing number of people who think and act for themselves, and, rightly or wrongly, are ready to defy the old simple rules founded on custom.

Thus, the modern state has lost its mass mind in getting education. But, you will say, this education destroys the primitive mass mind only to replace it with a number of mob minds : in the crowds which queue for the films or a match, read the same newspapers, and shout for the same spellbinders. Mass education is driving out the sound, traditional culture to bring in a lot of half-baked slogans. It produces the shallow brain seeking only to be distracted from serious reflection.

But these ' mobs ' have no resemblance to those of the tribal world where every individual does the same thing at the same time—hunts, dances, drinks in the mass. Even if he had the will to do anything else, it would not be there to do. The modern individual has an immense choice of occupation and amusement. So that the ' mass ' of sight-seers at any show-place today is actually composed of individuals who have freely chosen to join that crowd and will join a different one tomorrow. What looks like a proof of the mob mind is really evidence of spreading interests among the people and a variety of occupations. And if some of these interests are ' popular,' aimed at a crowd which is not very critical or reflective, they are a good deal more so than interests which were the only recourse of their ancestors—dog-fighting, bear-baiting, the fit-up melodrama or one-night stand, once a year, and booze.

In the best educated countries, you find the biggest demand for something new in amusement as well as for instruction. Education enlarges all the interests of a man. Apart from what he learns, he acquires a general curiosity and a wider taste.

Compare the press of today with that of a hundred or even fifty years ago. You will find a far greater variety of subjects appealing to a greater variety of tastes. You will find instructive articles on matters formerly dealt with only in the special magazines. Perhaps they don't aim at a learned audience, but they help the general reader to get some idea of what the experts are doing in atomic research or medicine or even astronomy. If you want to write a best seller, your best subject nowadays is probably cosmology.

But if a hundred thousand people are ready to buy a book on the nature of the universe, you have a mass demand at the bookshops. The mass demand is not a proof of falling standards: it means that millions are being educated who would formerly have been left in the illiterate mass. There are 'masses' reading learned works just as there are other 'masses' going to popular films. The number of people with a good university education is many hundred times what it was fifty years ago, and that explains the immense development of arts and literature in experimental forms that would have had no chance of appreciation before. And in the millions in the next category who have just become literate in the last generation, whose reactions to education have given rise to this illusion of an increasing 'mass mind,' what we are seeing is not a collapse of standards, but a very rapid improvement. The crowds at the cinemas and the bus loads on the sight-seeing tours are on the way up. They have already left the mass; they are individuals seeking ideas for themselves.

The mass mind idea is not only a bit of nonsense, it is dangerous nonsense. It leads to a profound defeatism, to the secret and unacknowledged belief that the dictators hold all the trumps.

The reasoning, when you bring it to light, is something like this. There are two kinds of education in the world: the free, which develops the individual according to his nature, and the specialised, which turns out doctors, scientists, mechanics—useful servants of the state or of industry. In a democracy each individual has both types. In the Soviet he gets only the specialised—the whole plan is to make him a state slave.

But it seems that free education merely debases the standards of thought and life by producing mob minds without spiritual strength. Meanwhile the Soviet acquires millions of workers, docile as serfs, yet skilful as our own craftsmen. Aiming deliberately at the creation of a mass mind it will easily defeat the free world, where opinions are shallow and divided.

But this is based on bad psychology. The West is not producing a mass mind, but a variety of strong minds with the richest sense of adventure and will for discovery. The East is not succeeding in obtaining a mass mind either—it is going in the opposite direction. Merely by process of education, it is producing every year people who can at least think a little more freely than illiterate peasants, who are very likely therefore to think critical thoughts, however much they may hide them. That is why the task of the dictatorship

MASS MIND : A MODERN CATCHWORD

becomes constantly more difficult, why it is obliged to stiffen its grip, to hire more police, to bribe more spies, and to purge its own party, every year or so, of 'deviators.'

What I suggest is that no kind of education, however narrow, can produce the mass mind. The reason is that minds are creative, that thoughts wander by themselves and cannot be controlled by the cleverest police. All education is free in this sense ; it cannot be shut up within walls. To teach people to think, if only to make them more useful as soldiers and mechanics, is to open all thoughts to them—a whole world of new ideas. And though the dictator may wish to think of them as a proletariat they have already begun to leave the proletariat.

The 'mass mind' is a delusion. How many dictators have been amazed when their rule, which seemed so strong, has collapsed in a few hours, without a friend ?

The Tower of the Four Winds

BY PETER MATTHIESSEN

FROM Serrano's house, the Tower of the Four Winds could not be seen, even if one leaned way out over the dead red flowers under the window-ledge. The Tower was high on the south-west corner of the castle ruin, and it occurred to me that Serrano's window must be the only window in Olite from which it was impossible to see it if one leaned out far enough, and perhaps the only window in the several neighbouring towns as well.

If there *was* one window like that, Serrano would be sure to have it, not out of conscious design but because his fate was to be omitted, a minstrel playing to a heedless century, with only the whispered applause of a windswept ruin to sustain him.

The flute lay on the sill beneath my waist, aged by two years of sun and disuse : I did not look at it, pretending not to have noticed it at all, but remained leaning from the window, searching the roof-tops for the invisible tower, my back to the stealthy reproach of the rooms.

The window was perched in a long thin street which wound its cobbled way high through the town, venturing from one abyss of narrow buildings on to the hot open hillside, then back into another abyss, closed and dark under the faded sky of Navarre.

The street was called the Boulevard General Mola, but that portion of it immediately visible Serrano had called the cat promenade, not because there were more cats here than farther uphill but because, at mid-day, the cats alone found business to do in the street, mincing through the warm shadows and the parched odour of olive oil and stale red wine with a dignity impossible in the active hours.

Now, from the dark heat of the other rooms, the whispers of Serrano's wife to his children troubled the stillness, hurrying them beyond the eyes of the intruder. I remembered the family photographs displayed by Serrano two years before, and would have liked to talk with his people, but that was no longer possible. The Serrano of wealth and position had been but a myth ; by trapping

him without warning in his poverty, I had deeply offended him, not only by a breach of Spanish manners but, worse, by shattering forever the elusive friendship so marvellously complicated by the Tower.

The black car, huge in the street below, deepened my depression. I watched a child steal from an alley and stalk the car like a thin gray fox before running a wondering finger over its sheen. The car seemed as brassy and out of place as the visit itself.

Two years before, I did not have the car. I came by bus to Pamplona, grinding up the mountains from the coast. On the same bus was the Inspector of Government Inns, Serrano, his route adjusted to the Festival of San Fermin, and seated for three hours together, we worked out a sort of patois which was to become the least coherent language of our understanding.

Serrano was a small man, with a sad, fine-featured face under a high forehead. The face was sensitive and alert, and when he smiled, the sadness retired to the eyes. His laugh drew me especially, a sort of earnest expression of mirth with all of the man behind it, a soft, no-really-this-is-too-much laugh geared to the final joke of the world, the last stroke of human folly before the day of Judgement. The laugh belied the neat black suit, silent and proper beneath it, and I wondered if the man were in mourning. Almost immediately Serrano had said, searching into my eyes :

'No, no, I am not in mourning, it is ridiculous to think so.'

'I know,' I said, startled. 'I didn't think you were.'

'Of course you did,' Serrano said, and laughed. 'No,' he added, 'five years ago I was in mourning for two years ;' we stay in mourning for a long time, you know, and now I find I like the suit. But see, I am wearing a red tie with it.'

'You look very well in it,' I laughed.

'Of course I do, it becomes me very well, I know.' And he grinned, shyly this time, the curious sadness creeping back into his eyes and out over his face like a gentle wind over a small, still stretch of water. Already the eyes were averted to the window, where the hills of slow dark green fell away from the road, climbing to buttes and narrow ridges, descending to far, roadless valleys, where groups of dark-faced Basques hoed the tilted fields.

There had been rain that year, and the fields were not dusty with yellow poverty like those I could now see over the roof-tops from Serrano's window.

But two years ago, I caught no hint of want, certainly not from

Serrano himself. In Pamplona, on the eve of San Fermin, I saw only the photographs of the family at the beach at San Sebastian, and the calling card—'Inspector of Government Inns,' Boulevard General Mola, 40—and was impressed more than he imagined by his freedom to attend the festival, forgetting the great numbers of peasants who shared the privilege for this one week in a long hard year. Duped by the paraphernalia of his Spanish pride, the calling card, the generosity, and the one good suit, I permitted him to buy my wine throughout the week.

The black suit disappeared after that first evening. Serrano had a white shirt and pants with red neckerchief and sash, the traditional costume of the Festival, and carrying a goatskin sack of red wine and his flute, then three months old, he voyaged all week through the streets, singing and drinking and dancing the jota throughout the nights, in a crowd of a thousand twins. He seemed impervious to alcohol or fatigue, as did his myriad friends, but joyous, only laughed and drank, drank and danced, retiring for an incredibly short period each morning to the hallway where he kept his suitcase.

And time after time, Serrano lured me from my hotel room with his flute, elevated from the sidewalk below, to lead me in an ungainly prance to the central square, where the wine flowed remorseless among the whirling whites and reds of the dancers, and the darkness rose and fell like a rich pageant curtain over the town.

The bullfights every afternoon were my special interest, but Serrano did not like them, they were tiresome, he said. He admired the bulls, however, and together we went down through the city walls and over the river to the white adobe corrals.

There were six bulls in each corral, each six from a separate province of Spain, and Serrano said that if they were startled, they would charge and gore one another . . . but that a man coming quietly could sit on the wall of the white corral and see how truly beautiful they were in repose. When the rest of the town was in the Plaza de Toros, Serrano would come and observe the friends who were left, six less every day, and once, for my benefit, when the attendant was not watching, Serrano slipped into a corral through a narrow exit aperture and walked slowly along the wall to another exit. The six black bulls watched him but did not move, chewing their cud by the watering trough with slow bovine sadness.

I congratulated him for this, but Serrano assured me it was nothing, saying that if he had jumped down from the wall instead, the bulls would surely have charged him. As long as he didn't

hop around, he said, he could sit in their corral all day and play his flute, although he had never tried it.

We walked back up the road to the town, never saying very much, smiling in a way which would have been silly between two Americans, yet with Serrano became a meaningful recognition of the human joke and the worth of spontaneity and happiness.

On the last day, Serrano asked me if I had never heard of the castles of Navarre, and when I said yes, Serrano said he would take me in the bus to see the best of the castles, the Palace of the Kings in Olite.

Moving down from the plateau, the road to Olite ran through a series of stunted villages, past a Roman water dyke and the ruined walls of castles on summits long since accessible, levelling off and heading south through the fields toward Castille. It left the main road some distance from the town, but the cathedral part of the palace was already visible across the fields, its outlines as soft and vague in the sunlight as withered human majesty.

Serrano straightened in his seat, wide-eyed and smiling, as if the wonder of the spectacle was too much for him. Then he popped the flute into his mouth and blew forth a few strains of a basque schottische, turning the old people slowly in their seats and causing the young people to laugh and say, 'Ole!' and 'Otra, otra!' and 'El Pamplonico!' One of the young men, his red handkerchief loose around his neck, awoke from a heavy slumber and blinking, passed his wineskin forward over the seats, and in a moment the antique bus was swaying with the voices and feet:

Uno de inierno, dos de febrero
Tres de marzo, quatro de abril
Cinco de mayo, seis de junio
Siete de julio
San Fermin !

The voice of the flute was lost in the wave of sound. After a moment, Serrano removed it from his mouth and said:

'You see, amigo, they think I am a Pamplonico, these types, all except that old one up front who keeps winking at me so slyly; he lives in the next house at Olite. The others, they are either drunk or do not come from Olite, because they do not know me, and it is a very small town.'

'Some of the others recognise you, too,' I said, looking around.

'Yes, of course they do, the silly people, but they do not want to at this moment because they are caught up by the spirit, and it is

more fun to shout "El Pamplonico!" than "Little Serrano, the neighbour's boy."

Serrano's eyes were bright with laughter, and I saw that he too was caught up in it, the abandon of comedy and the moment which had lingered in the bus from Pamplona. The feeling was so exciting that I could barely refrain from running up and down the aisle of the bus congratulating the passengers on the discovery of happiness.

The bus gained speed on the last downgrade and roared triumphantly into Olite, scattering the cats and dogs and burros and children which littered the dusty square. A number of male passengers then seized us by the elbows and marched us several blocks to the wine shop of a communal friend, where we descended through the wine presses to the cellar. There were openings along the cool concrete wall, huge square vats of wine, and there we celebrated, at ten in the morning, the health of the matadors, the health of Pamplona, the health of Olite, the health of the flute, and the health of myself and the Estados-Unidos of America. Afterwards, we sang a number of romantic songs, Serrano conducting the voices with his flute and dancing accompaniment simultaneously on the wine-red floor. And after the songs, it was decided we should all go and enjoy the view from the Palace of the Kings.

However, the sun was very hot and the view quite far away, and of the original band, only Serrano and myself and a small dog were left at the entrance to the Palace.

Serrano said the others must have become lost on the way, he could hear their voices calling over the length and breadth of the town. As for myself, my feet would pay me no heed, but under the influence of the sun, wandered blithely in every direction, and I could only remark that I had never been happier in my life, not only because it was true but because, overwhelmed, I could think of nothing else to say.

The inner court of the palace, protected by permanent shadows, was a cloister of seclusion. The paving was softened by returning grass which, sown by the wind feeling its way around the corners and down the cool stone stairways, now flourished in the gentle light descending through the arches and the high opened rooms.

We moved through it whispering, as in a cathedral, gazing in awe at the passing sky framed by the endings of roofs and buttresses, touching the moss which reclaimed the inner stones, resting for thoughtful minutes in the damp, fresh corners where, free of the

THE TOWER OF THE FOUR WINDS

ancient plumbing which veined the broken places, the springs ran weakly over the stones.

Like two accomplices, we climbed a stairway winding endlessly upward, round and round the spiralled passage which soared in darkness to the sun, pierced here and there by a square of light through which the sinking village could be seen. As if quitting forever the heat and street smells of our existence, we plodded skywards, coming at last to the highest part, a small square terrace which gave on the entirety of the Palace, the town, the neighbouring towns, and the shimmering July of Navarre. Directly below, a monastery adjoined the palace wall, its sanctified acreage girded with stone, yet vulnerable to the tower, and the air was curved with the wings of swallows, travelling in endless arcs throughout the upper ruins.

When I turned, Serrano had gone, and I started from my spell, sure that he had fallen until I heard from somewhere, muted and distant, the tone of the flute. Waiting, I returned to my reverie as to a half-sleep, and then the flute was high and clear, drifting over the wind from another tower.

The second tower was a younger sister to my own, slender and gracefully made, and situated on a prominent abutment on the south-west edge of the ramparts. For base it had four strong columns, the corner supports of a delicate open terrace whose white stone arches gave in every direction over the land. The swallows crossed it on their course, flickering down and through, and up again on the other side of the tower, as if for one last time before it powdered and crumbled forever upon the wind now flowing through it.

High above the terrace, Serrano called to me, his voice mysterious in the rising air.

'It is called the Tower of the Four Winds,' the voice came; it strayed away like a wisp of smoke in the sun, replaced by the wavering pipe of the flute. I watched him against the summer distance, a small man certain of this single moment, its permanence and glory.

* * *

I was not taken to the house that day because Serrano's instinct forbade it, had guessed that the Tower of the Four Winds should culminate the day, the spirit, perhaps even the friendship itself.

And I had not sensed this, or had at least forgotten it, hurrying

by automobile to recapture something which had never truly been captured, a moment and a man as warm and passing as the wind coursing through the ancient court.

Boulevard General Mola, asleep in the sun, gave me no warning, nor did the dark passage which led through Number 40 to the narrow stairs. The climb was a short one, placing me before the door of Serrano, the Inspector of Government Inns, with offices at General Mola, 40. The door was opened at the instant of my first suspicion by Serrano's wife, a soft barefoot woman with two soiled children behind her in the shadow, who whispered, 'Serrano ! Serrano !' into the darkness.

I could not move.

And then a small dark man appeared, angry in his night-shirt, who stared at me as at a figure from another life, and tried not to weep as he poured out the cognac from a dusty bottle and ran behind his family to their bedroom.

I did not want to see the front room, nor notice the flute on the window-sill : I leaned instead from the window overlooking the street.

At last, he came in behind me, stiff in the black suit, and ushered me from the window and out the door, pausing only to slip the flute under his coat.

We went to the best café in Olite.

Serrano placed the flute like a stage prop on the table between us, and although we sat for a little while, he did not mention his family, nor the house on General Mola. Two strangers, we had nothing to say to each other.

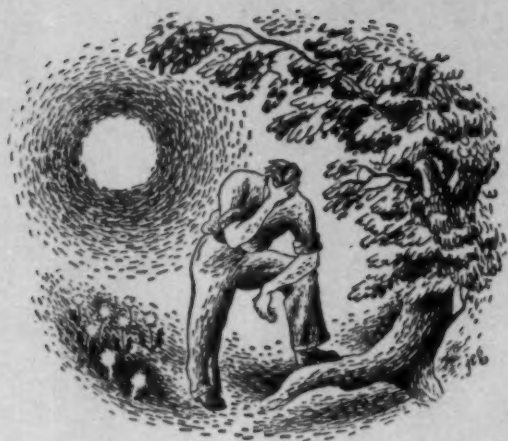
He gave me, on parting, a pocket guide to the Palace of the Kings.

Magnificat

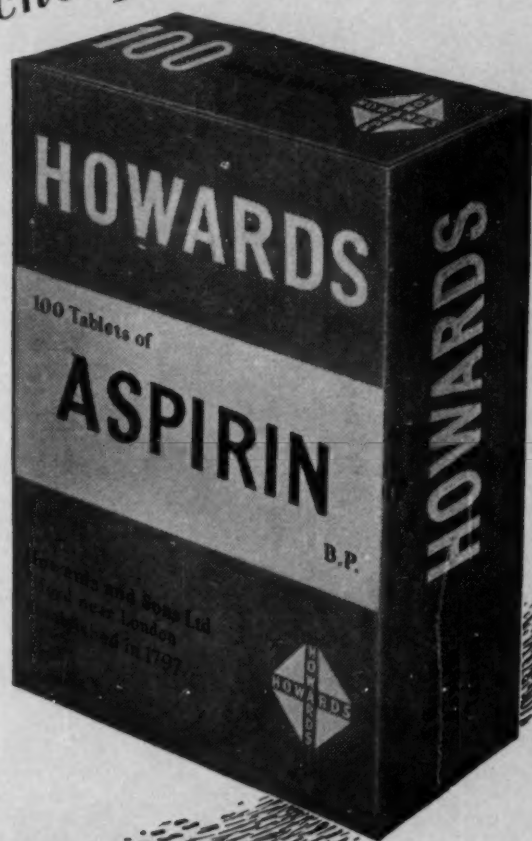
BY KATHARINE GARVIN

I am the magnifying glass :
The bright rock crystal carved to hold the Light ;
Through me the Holy One shall pass
Enlarged to peering mortal sight
That now can only minify
The immensity of love of the Most High.

So in my flesh, as glassy pure
And crystallised by grace from cloudy earth,
I hold and let Him grow secure,
Enlarging in perfection till His birth
When cradle-small, at once adored,
I see how I have magnified the Lord.



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A brief guide to the works of
WILLIAM SANSOM

His earliest stories appeared in literary periodicals such as *New Writing* and *Horizon*, and were written between spells of Fire Service duty. His first published books were two collections of these ; and SIR OSBERT SITWELL described him as 'one of the most gifted, if not the most gifted, of younger writers'. MR. SANSOM subsequently devoted himself to writing as a career, and his first novel *The Body* was hailed by JOHN BETJEMAN as the work of 'a full-length novelist of the top class'. More recent books have justified these opinions and won tributes from PETER QUENNEL ('a genuine artist') and RAYMOND MORTIMER ('the most spirited writer of his generation').

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